

Mission Council

The Hayes Conference Centre
Swanwick, Derbyshire
15 to 17 November 2019



The
United
Reformed
Church



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

October 2019

Dear Colleagues,

**Mission Council
Friday to Sunday 15 to 17 November 2019
The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire.**

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 www.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 A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish to be withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time given for discussion.

We do rely on every Mission Council member to read the papers and take information back to synods. In using the *En Bloc* method of decision-making there is no wish to bury information or avoid discussions that Mission Council ought to have. We must all ensure the appropriate flow of information from Mission Council to 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
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. We are not expected to post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction only applies when Council is in session; members may post online 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, anything shared online 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	Assembly arrangements
G2	Ethical investment
H1	Ministers on more than one roll
H2	New sub-committee of ministries committee
I2	Mission committee update
I3	Walking the Way update
J1	List of nominations
M2	Changes to Rules of Procedure
M3	Roll of Mission Council
O1, O2, O3	Human resources advisory group

Category B: Two-thirds majority voting

None

Category C: Consensus decision making

B1	Children's and youth work committee
D1	Lay Preaching and Stepwise
G1	Budget for 2020 (this paper is designated urgent)
J2	Supplementary nominations (this paper is coming late) *
M1	Resourcing worship
M4	Appointments to General Secretariat (this paper is coming late) *
R1 and R2	Safeguarding

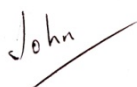
For discussion only – any necessary decisions will come at a later stage

G3	Integrated risk management
H3	Pastoral supervision
I1	Legacies of Slavery

8. One discussion – involving paper G1 – is designated by the Moderators as urgent. This is because we need a clear working budget for 2020 before the start of that year.
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
15 to 17 November 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>A</p>	<p>TONY HAWS <i>Leader</i> SHIRLEY MILLER <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>John Bradbury Richard Church Elaine Colechin Anne Lewitt Helen Lidgett AJ Mills Lythan Nevard John Piper Andrew Prasad</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>STEVE FABER <i>Leader</i> FRAN KISSACK <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>Helen Everard Nicola Furley-Smith Joan Grindrod-Helm David Grosch-Miller Ian Hardie Graham Hoslett Andy Jackson Gwen Jennings Alan Yates</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>DAVID GREATOREX <i>Leader</i> SAM RICHARDS <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>Francis Brienen Tim Crossley Ken Forbes Tom Howells Margaret Marshall Jim Merrilees Marilyn Piper Simon Walkling Paul Whittle</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>JACKY EMBREY <i>Leader</i> ANDREW EVANS <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>Jane Baird Sue Brown David Herbert Keir Hounsome Ken Howcroft Myra Rose Alan Spence Marion Tugwood George Watt</p>
<p>E</p>	<p>SIMON FAIRNINGTON <i>Leader</i> ELIZABETH CLARK <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>Philip Brooks David Coaker Ruth Dixon Clare Downing Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor Paul Franklin Peter Pay Peter Stevenson Sandra Wallace</p>	<p>F</p>	<p>JENNY MILLS <i>Leader</i> DAVID PICKERING <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>Adrian Bulley Bernie Collins Brian Jolly Nick Jones Andrew Middleton Maria Mills Fiona Thomas Pam Tolhurst</p>
<p>G</p>	<p>VAL MORRISON <i>Leader</i> BILL ROBSON <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>Ray Adams Chuka Agbasiere Natalie Gibbs Rita Griffiths Rosie Martin Charles Mather John Samson Phil Wall Kevin Watson</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>RUTH WHITEHEAD <i>Leader</i> GEORGE FARIS <i>Reporter</i></p> <p>Bridget Akinyombo James Breslin Rosie Buxton Melanie Campbell Philip French Michael Jagessar Peter Meek Sarah Moore Reuben Watt</p>

Mission Council agenda

15 to 17 November 2019, The Hayes, Swanwick

Notes: (a) 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.

(b) Rooms for any group work in this agenda will be made known when you arrive.

Friday 15 November		
12:00 – 12:45	Introduction session for new MC members	
12:00 – 13:00	<i>Registration in the main house reception area</i>	
13:00	Lunch	
Session one		
14:00 – 15:30	Worship and Bible study Introductions and admin Minutes and matters arising (including brief report on responses to resolution five from Assembly) Children's and youth work committee	B1
15:30	Tea break <i>Access to rooms available</i>	
Session two		
16.30 – 18.15	Budget (G1) and financial planning (G3) Education and learning	G1, G3 D1
18:30 – 20:00	Dinner	
Session three		
20.00 to 21.00	Resourcing worship Legacies of Slavery (introduction of issues)	M1 I1
21.00	Evening prayers	
Saturday 16 November		
8:15	Breakfast	
Session four		
9:15 – 11:00	Worship and Bible study Groupwork on Legacies of Slavery	I1
11:00	Coffee	

Session five 11:30 – 13.00	Safeguarding		R2, R1
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch		
Session six 14:00 – 16:00	Free time or remaindered business		
16.00	Tea available		
Session seven 16.30 – 18.16	En bloc resolutions		
	Nominations tabled paper		J2
	Appointments to the General Secretariat		M4
	Ministries: intro and then group work		H3
18:30 – 20:00	Dinner		
Session eight 20:00 – 21:00	Matters removed from en bloc		
21.00	Evening prayers		
Sunday 17 November			
8:15	Breakfast		
Session nine 9:30 – 10:45	Worship, including Bible study and Holy Communion (including induction of the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, Secretary for Ministries)		
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee		
Session ten 11.15 – 12.45	Remaindered business		
	Election, thanks and greetings.		
13:00	Lunch and departures		
13:45 – 15:00 (max)	Meeting of committee convenors		

Paper A1

AAC Report

Assembly arrangements committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	James Breslin james_breslin2@outlook.com
Action required	None.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Assembly 2020.
Main points	Plans for 2020 are coming together well.
Previous documents	Paper A1 at Mission Council in May 2019.
Consultation has taken place with...	Children and youth; Communications; Equalities; West Midlands Synod.

Summary of impact

Financial	We appear to be keeping close to budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This is a significant dimension of Assembly.

1. All accommodation for the General Assembly in Birmingham has now been booked. Slightly over half of the members will be accommodated in Conference Aston premises with the others in one of two hotels nearby.
2. As far as possible all documentation relating to the Assembly will be circulated electronically, but hard copy will be available for those who request it.
3. All meals will be provided in the Conference Aston dining room, except breakfast for those staying in hotels. During the day tea, coffee and light refreshments will be available to purchase from two coffee bars which are adjacent to the main Assembly hall.
4. For the first time, the main act of worship on Sunday morning will be live streamed to enable congregations and individuals to share in this event, which will include the induction of the new General Secretary. Members of Local Churches close to the Assembly Hall will be welcome to join with the Assembly on that occasion, but by the use of live streaming others farther away will also be able to share in this event.

Paper B1

Update November 2019

Children's and youth work committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Jenny Mills (Convenor) revdjmill@btinternet.com Dr Sam Richards sam.richards@urc.org.uk
Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council approves the revised remit for a Pilots subcommittee (replacing the previous constitution) to come into effect from January 2020.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To update Mission Council on the progress of the children's and youth work committee strategy in year one and propose a revised constitution for Pilots.
Main points	A research project to develop discipleship within Messy Churches is to be undertaken. The committee continues to pursue the five year strategy. Pilots is to restructure its committees. URC Youth Assembly requires contingency funding to prevent safeguarding issues.
Previous relevant documents	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 May 2019 Mission Council: B1 – Children's and youth work committee – Update May 2019
Consultation has taken place with...	Pilots management committee Chief Finance Officer URC Youth Executive Lucy Moore (Messy Church), Claire Dalpra (Church Army Research) and BRF URC Fresh Expressions enabling group CYDO+ team.

Summary of impact

Financial	Additional funding is required for the Messy Church discipleship research. The Pilots budget will be incorporated into the wider children's and youth work budget. Additional provision to underwrite Youth Assembly may be required to enable sole use of the venue.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Closer working relationships with Messy Church.

Update on strategy and implementation of resolutions from Mission Council November 2018

Resolution one (from November 2018). 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.

- 1.1 The 2018 review of children's and youth work in the URC discovered that over 20% of our churches are running a Messy Church. In January 2019 a Church Army Report 'Playfully Serious – how Messy Churches create new space for faith', based on research conducted for the Church Commissioners concluded: Messy Church is reaching people who didn't previously attend church, growing disciples and modelling new patterns of leadership, and is doing so across a wide range of economic and social contexts. One of their key findings was that 'Messy Churches can find creating a culture of discipleship demanding'; and a key recommendation was that 'being intentional about discipleship is important'. This resonated with the Walking the Way focus for the URC and identified a strategic area of children's and youth work practice across the denomination.
- 1.2 Dr Sam Richards has been working with Lucy Moore, founder of Messy Church, to develop a piece of research within the URC to respond directly to these issues. A two year research project to discover 'how can we enable local churches to enhance Messy Church practice for discipleship development?' has been developed. This will involve the CYDO+ team supporting local churches through appreciative inquiry and action research to develop, capture and disseminate innovation and effective practice. Over the coming 18 months the team will accompany local Messy Church teams to become more intentional about discipleship and develop their practice in ways that reflect the strengths, resources, children and families, and context in which they work. Findings will be shared with the URC, Messy Church community and wider church.

- 1.3 The Church of England has just made a grant of £100,000 for the parallel piece of research being undertaken in three dioceses (see www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/grant-awarded-research-messy-churches). This research has been developed in response to the URC proposal to Lucy Moore and BRF for our research (as she was keen to widen the impact of the action research approach we are taking).

Funding for this was sought from the Legacy Fund, however the finance committee was of the view that this should be funded from the URC general budget. £36,000 is requested over two years to cover the costs of Lucy Moore's time, gatherings for the Messy Church teams, publishing findings with a launch event, plus additional team costs incurred conducting the research.

Resolution two – 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.

URC – aim: thriving local congregations with inclusive, intercultural and intergenerational ethos which are growing those inside and reaching those outside

Purpose for CYWC: **children and young people playing their part in the mission of God**

Missional discipleship with children and young people that encompasses experiencing, exploring and expressing the Way of Jesus in, through and beyond the church.

- 2.1 Strategy – work to support and strengthen local congregations in five key areas since May 2019:

- Faith – sharing spiritual resources: The Gift booklet; FOFA trial groups
- Community – sharing relational resources: The Gift and Where are the Children booklets
- Identity – sharing stories, events, connections: The Big Speak Out weekend for 11-18s; Greenbelt Youth Ambassadors; Good news and young people's reports on opportunities
- Engagement – sharing in the life of the local context: Where are the Children? booklet
- Growth – sharing new, creative, risky change (to develop potential): Leaders' Gathering; Messy Church Research project

- 2.2 Five year strategy key tasks progress since May 2019:

2.2.1 Re-unite all the parts of children's and youth work: see 4. below and the resolution concerning Pilots

2.2.2 Initiate deliberate culture change - non-competitive intergenerational whole life missional discipleship throughout whole church: work with Stepwise; EM1 summer school on intergenerational kingdom; 'The Gift' booklet

2.2.3 Focus on churches with 'no' children and young people (year one 2019): targeted mailings; visits to churches; 'Where are the children?' and 'The Gift' booklets; prayer partner churches for new FOFA groups

- 2.2.4 Focus on under 5s, then 5-11s, then 11-18s, then 18+ (years two to five, 2020-2024): planning for future
- 2.2.5 Reshape CYDO programme – all synods and Church House as learning community and team: CYDO+ team meetings open to all synods; training opportunities for team and training digest; Messy Church research project includes skill development for team
- 2.2.6 Reshape Pilots – including project with Messy Church – Friends on Faith Adventures trial before launch in 2020; Messy Church research project
- 2.2.7 Develop accessible go-to resource bank with links to URC people: awaiting potential development of URC website
- 2.2.8 Develop communication – reinvest in face2face: visits to churches and synods; bi-monthly e-newsletter; social media
- 2.2.9 Celebrate!! Development of the revised Lundie Medal to celebrate children and young people playing their part in the mission of God, to be launched January 2020.

Resolution three – 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.

- 3.1 Children’s and youth work committee express their appreciation of the positive developments and inclusive approach within the CYDO+ team and the way it is working together in developing and delivering Assembly-level resources, programmes and events. The team is proactively identifying and undertaking a variety of pieces of work, including redesigning the Child Friendly Church Award. Conversations continue with those synods without CYDOs to enable them to find their place within the new approach.
- 3.2 The Messy Church research is a URC-wide project which will enable all synods who wish to be involved to benefit local churches, along with professional development opportunities for the CYDO+s. The requested funding should enable all synods to participate by enabling additional expenses to be covered centrally where necessary.

Resolution four – 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.

- 4.1 Pilots Management Committee (PMC) has reviewed its constitution, last updated in 2002 (see appendix B). There have been important changes since 2002 which render the old constitution out of date. The Congregational Federation ceased to co-sponsor Pilots in 2013. The Pilots Publication Board has already been incorporated into the PMC. The proposed new constitution (appendix A) reflects the following changes:

- (i) A change of name from Pilots management committee to Pilots subcommittee to clarify the relationship to children's and youth work committee as an integrated part of wider provision within the URC, in line with the five year strategy.
 - (ii) Updated as the committee has changed its name to children's and youth work committee (CYWC).
 - (iii) The revised ethos/mission statement approved by PMC.
 - (iv) A change of name for the role from Pilots Convenor to Pilots subcommittee Convenor to parallel the change in name for the committee.
 - (v) The previous role of URC representative (appointed by nominations committee) will cease to exist and be replaced by a CYWC representative. The current URC representative will take this role until the end of their term.
 - (vi) The makeup of the committee altered to reflect the change in relationship to children's and youth work committee, wider changes in the URC, and the work of the committee in the service and development of Pilots.
 - (vii) The role of Resources Member replaces the previous Pilots Publication Board (a subcommittee of the old Pilots management committee whose function has now been merged with the Pilots subcommittee).
 - (viii) The role of Treasurer no longer exists as Pilots budget will be merged with CYWC.
 - (ix) Church House roles are not named, as the previous roles have ceased to exist (Pilots Development Officer), to allow for possible future changes.
- 4.2 This revised constitution needs to be approved by Mission Council. If it is approved, then the Pilots budget will be incorporated into the wider children's and youth work budget, with designated funds remaining allocated to the work of Pilots.
- 4.3 Friends On Faith Adventures or FOFA, the new children's work programme, is being trialled currently in a number of churches. Registration is open for new groups who will be able to start running from January 2020. 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. 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.

Youth Executive and Youth Assembly 2020 plans

- 5.1 In response to resolution two from 2019 Youth Assembly, challenging "... 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", a resource created by Youth Executive was sent to all churches in June, encouraging them to consider the representation of children and young people in their structures and meetings.
- 5.2 In response to resolution four from the 2019 Youth Assembly "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", Youth Executive

have been working with URC Comms to produce guidance for local churches.

- 5.3 Plans for Youth Assembly 2020 – common ground: where is it? 24-26 January at Whitemoor Lakes, Staffordshire in are now well-developed. Following the trial last year, there will be a Taster Day on the Saturday for Year7/S1's up to age 16, and a creche to enable URC Youth members with children under 5 to attend. Last year, for the first time, another group booked part of the venue for some of the weekend, as we were not able to afford the cost of booking sole use. Having evaluated the impact of this on the event, and the safeguarding implications that arise, Youth Executive and children's and youth work committee have asked that provision be made in the budget to underwrite (if necessary) the full cost for sole use of the venue. Alternative venues are either not available for the dates required, or they offer less at greater cost. Finance committee has agreed to add this to the budget as a contingency (only to be used if required to ensure the venue is not shared). A contingency sum is estimated in the order of £8,000. But if we can attract more young people to the event then we shall not need to draw on this whole sum. All synods are asked to do all they can to encourage more young people to attend Youth Assembly.

Appendix A: Proposed new remit for Pilots subcommittee

1. Pilots is an organisation of the United Reformed Church for children and young people from five years of age under the general oversight of the children's and youth work committee
2. Pilots believe that children and young people matter. Pilots offers local churches a way of sharing the love of God in the ongoing life of Jesus Christ by inviting them on an exciting journey together. [Pilots Ethos/Mission Statement 2019]
3. The aims of the Pilots organisation are:
 - to enable children, young people and those working with them to grow physically, mentally and spiritually through a programme of discovery, play, activities and projects
 - to help children and young people to be part of the church locally, nationally and internationally
 - to encourage self-respect and personal development
 - to support children and young people in the development of their own, unique worldviews, promoting peace, justice, mercy, love and all that Christian Faith involves
 - to encourage children and young people towards commitment to the Christian Faith
 - to nurture loving concern for other people and the whole world.
4. Pilots Subcommittee Convenor (iv) is appointed by General Assembly and is responsible for leading the Pilots subcommittee to manage the organisation,

ensuring it meets its aims and objectives, and prepares and decides on publications such as required. The officers and members of the Pilots subcommittee, apart from the Convenor, will be appointed through the children's and youth work committee.

5. The Pilots subcommittee will comprise of the following members:
 - Pilots subcommittee Convenor appointed by General Assembly for a period of four years
 - Resources Member – responsible for Pilots publication and linking with Church House staff to create all Pilots materials (two year term of office renewable for further two years)
 - Children and youth work committee member (two year term of office)
 - Regional Pilots Officers x 2 (two year term of office renewable for further two years)
 - Children and Youth Development Officer and Team Representative (two year term of office)
 - Pilots Representative (two year term of Office) (under 26)
 - Pilots Company Representatives/FOFA Group Representatives two to four members (two year term of office renewable for further two years)
6. The subcommittee may co-opt other members to join the committee for specific pieces of work or to bring additional skills and experiences up to a maximum of three members(viii).
7. Other members of the subcommittee will be the URC Church House staff working with Pilots.
8. Pilots subcommittee convenor will report to and bring concerns from the pilots subcommittee to the children and youth work committee and vice-versa.
9. Pilots companies are formed and established within local churches, affiliated to the Pilots organisation through the Pilots desk at URC Church House. They are entitled to receive support, resources and training, and uphold the rules and standards of Pilots. Each synod has facility for appointing a Regional Pilots Officer (RPO) whose responsibilities will be to support and link with each Pilots company in that synod.
10. Pilots is launching Friends On Faith Adventures (FOFA) in 2020, a new children's work programme for 5s-11s+. FOFA groups will be affiliated to Pilots through the Pilots desk, and supported by RPOS and synod lead workers (CYDO+ Team).

*Margaret Smith Convenor of Pilots management committee
16 September 2019*

Appendix B: Pilots constitution 2002

Preamble (based on “Gales of Change”) edited by Bernard Thorogood)

During the Second World War a working relationship of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) children’s section under the Revd. Bert Hamilton, and the London Missionary Society (LMS) under the Revd Joyce Rutherford and her assistant Frances Speakman developed. They launched a “joint children’s” project for boys and girls from ages six to twelve, based on the imagery of the “John Williams” ships. It was non-uniformed and was called “Pilots”. The members, the pilots, trained to become ordinary seamen, able seamen, and midshipmen. They trained for various proficiency badges which they pasted into their “logbooks”. They went on voyages of discovery through studying specially written books of stories. In the winter months they concentrated on overseas mission stories, not restricted to the Pacific but covering all areas of mission activity of all the major British missionary societies. It was truly ecumenical. In the summer the voyages were in the “home waters” and dealt with mission in Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The Pilots committee was appointed by the CUEW and the LMS and reported to both bodies. There was similar co-operation between the LMS and the Congregational unions in Australia and New Zealand. The nominal head was “the master pilot”, the General Secretary of the LMS, first Dr Chirgwin then Maxwell Janes. The “secretary” was known as the “cabin boy”. Frances Speakman served in the first period. She was followed by Dorothy Biggs. They and their committees laid solid foundations and Pilots was subsequently recognised as a pioneer in the movement towards the integration of church and mission.

With the formation of The United Reformed Church (URC) in 1972, ownership of Pilots was formally transferred to the new denomination. The Congregational Federation has remained a sponsor of Pilots since that time

Over the intervening years, Pilots has retained its identity, whilst developing and growing under the leadership of a succession of Master Pilots (which evolved into the position of Pilots Development Officer). Pilots is currently divided into four age bands:

- Deckhands (aged 5 to 6)
- Adventurers (aged 7 to 10)
- Voyagers (aged 11 to 14)
- Navigators (aged 15 to 17)

Constitution

The Pilots management committee mission statement of 1999 states: “Pilots believes that children and young people matter. Therefore, Pilots gives local churches the chance to share the love of God in the ongoing life of Jesus Christ by inviting children and young people on an exciting journey”

1. Pilots is an organisation for children and young people that enables them to share in the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ by:
 - giving them the opportunity to respond to God
 - helping their self discovery in a secure, fun setting

- learning about the Church world-wide
 - responding to the needs of others and working for a fairer world
 - respecting the earth
2. Pilots is an organisation of the United Reformed Church and is ultimately under the authority of the General Assembly, but this is expressed by the general oversight of the children's and youth work committee and the management oversight of the Pilots management committee.
 3. Pilots companies can be formed in local churches but they must be affiliated to the Pilots organisation and observe its rules and standards. In turn they are entitled to receive support, resources and training.
 4. Pilots companies can also be formed in local churches of other denominations, subject to the same conditions as in (3). Partner denominations having more than 10 companies may apply to be sponsors of the Pilots organization. Sponsorship allows places on the Pilots management committee (one per sponsor with fewer than twenty companies, two for sponsors with more) and involves a contribution to the main budget of the Pilots organization.
 5. Sponsors contributions to the main budget will be approximately in the proportion of their number of companies to the total number of Pilots companies in any year. The exact amount will be negotiated by the children's and youth work committee, through the officers of the Pilots management committee, with each sponsor.
 6. The officers and members of the Pilots management committee will be appointed by the children's and youth work committee and its size may be varied from time to time. The committee will determine length of service, bearing in mind the normal URC term of four years. Those others entitled to nominate members appoint them and determine periods of service at their own discretion. Where possible the views of the serving Pilots management committee should be sought before appointments are made
 7. The membership of the PMC is: Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer, the Pilots representative to FURY Council, two members, two regional Pilots Officers (appointed by the Regional Pilots Officers themselves), two representatives of the Congregational Federation (as sponsor). Others may be invited by the Pilots management committee to attend as specialist advisers: such advisers may come from any participating denomination. The Pilots Development Officer will serve as Secretary to the PMC. A Minutes Secretary, who will be in attendance but not a member of the PMC may be appointed.
 8. The convenor or her/his representative will report to and bring concerns from the children's and youth work committee. The representatives of the sponsors will do the same in relation to own church's relevant committee.
 9. Pilots is structured through a regional organization, roughly corresponding with the two National Synods in Scotland and Wales and eleven provincial synods in England of the United Reformed Church.

John Waller, Deputy General Secretary, United Reformed Church in consultation with Pilots management committee – revised: 2002

Paper D1

Encouraging worship leading and preaching in the URC

Education and learning committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Mr Alan Yates, Convenor alan.yates@urc.org.uk The Revd Fiona Thomas, Secretary fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council resolves: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That from autumn 2020, the standard route, against which other routes will be measured, to becoming a synod-recognised lay preacher in the United Reformed Church and the standard route for progression to becoming an Assembly-accredited lay preacher will be based on Stepwise, in accordance with the proposals given in Appendix A of this paper;2. To request the education and learning committee in consultation with the ministries committee and appropriate committees and officers of the synods, to develop and publish detailed guidance by July 2020 for implementing resolution one.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The aim of the resolution is to ensure that there is continuity of provision for equipping worship leaders and lay preachers in the United Reformed Church, within changing times and contexts.
Main points	There are many strengths in the current system through which people gradually develop their ability to lead worship in the United Reformed Church. Stepwise seeks to equip people for whole life discipleship and an element of this for some people will be to exercise leadership of worship in a variety of contexts. This is an opportunity to create a more coherent system of development than has been possible in recent years.
Previous relevant documents	Report to Mission Council on the development of Stepwise in November 2017; Lay Preaching Strategy Proposal (resolution 35) accepted by General Assembly 2002.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Stepwise task and finish group (which has overall responsibility for the development of Stepwise), the ministries and education and learning committees, Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners, Synod

	Training and Development Officers, the design group for the faith-filled worship stream of Stepwise, and the convenors of the committees in each synod responsible for lay development.
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Summary of impact

Financial	It will cost much less to become Assembly-accredited than previously, when Stepwise is fully in place. The proposal is in tune with the discipleship development strategy adopted by Mission Council in March 2018 which advocated for more “joining the dots” between resources from synods and General Assembly.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	It is important that lay ministries can be seen to be ecumenically equivalent. This proposal allows stronger parallels particularly between Methodist Worship Leaders and synod-recognised Lay Preachers than has been the case previously.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Keeping the needs and expectations of congregations in mind, this paper suggests how Stepwise, as a discipleship development programme, can contribute to the confidence and competence of people called to help others to offer worship to God through the United Reformed Church.

2. Origin and development of the paper

- 2.1 Various drafts of this paper have been discussed by the Stepwise task and finish group (which has overall responsibility for the development of Stepwise), the ministries and education and learning committees, the annual meeting of the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners, Synod Training and Development Officers, and the design group for the faith-filled worship stream of Stepwise. A draft was circulated for comment to the convenors of the committees in each synod responsible for lay development. Insights from these groups have shaped this paper.

3. Reality and terminology

- 3.1 The term “Lay Preacher” does not describe the breadth and variety in what is happening on the ground amongst congregations. One commentator on the paper contrasted the lack of large numbers of people currently expressing a desire to train as accredited lay preachers with their observation in many places of people, often in small groups, who want to serve their local church, and possibly other churches around, by leading acts of worship.
- 3.2 “Breaking open the Word” i.e. wrestling with the Bible and drawing meaning from it for today is important. This is as much about facilitating discussion, prayer, reflection, and teaching as it is about preaching a sermon. The worship research project report of 2019 endorses creativity, depth, imagination, flexibility, diversity, and accessibility in worship. It identifies the importance of resourcing people to start where they are and keep developing. This seedbed for worship leading deserves to be valued and nurtured through Stepwise, as well as Stepwise

equipping people for the public role of lay preacher through synod-recognition and Assembly accreditation.

- 3.3 This paper is informed by the United Reformed Church's twin desires to move with the spirit and cherish people's gifts and vocations, while ensuring that there is proper order and accountability of people who somehow represent the church.

4. Beginning to lead worship

- 4.1 This can start with being asked to read one of the lessons on Sunday, or offer prayers during a house group, or use musical or artistic skill in some way during the service – every individual who is involved in leading worship in the URC begins somewhere.
- 4.2 Through a series of small, possibly faltering steps someone is taken further in their journey of discipleship and may be enabled to lead other disciples in worship. The means through which they decide to develop their skills and insight so that they keep deepening their abilities will vary.
- 4.3 Support structures include church members and friends, elders, ministers of all kinds, involvement in house groups and bible studies, local church training sessions including TLS-LITE, synod events, Resource Centre for Learning summer schools and conferences – what works for an individual will be particular to them although the awareness that someone has a gift for helping others to worship is collectively discerned, in the congregation, through trust.
- 4.4 In autumn 2020, the faith-filled worship Stepwise stream will become available for anyone who, having completed faith-filled life is drawn to delve deeper in order to experience more of shaping and leading worship, for whatever purpose.
- 4.5 The majority of people who engage in the faith-filled worship stream are likely to use what they learn simply for their own faith development and to serve their local church. That will be a valuable, considerable outcome. Much of the rest of this paper discusses how someone who finds themselves called to serve the URC in more public roles and wider responsibility could draw on their involvement in Stepwise for this.

5. Lay Preachers in the URC – current system

- 5.1 Although “Lay Preacher” is not always a helpful term, it is widely used and understood in the URC. For the sake of clarity, it is the term used in the rest of this paper. It should be remembered that the elders meeting of any United Reformed Church congregation or pastorate is free to ask anyone they wish to lead worship, other than presiding at the Sacraments.
- 5.2 The URC has reached a situation of having two kinds of “lay preacher”: synod-recognised and Assembly-accredited. In some cases synod-recognised is known as locally-recognised. Appendix B of this paper describes how the current system works.
- 5.3 Two areas for improvement which the new system will address are:

- i. Having a clear progression route from synod-recognition to Assembly accreditation;
- ii. Enabling transfer of synod-recognition when a lay preacher moves to another synod.

6. Synod involvement

- 6.1 Synods have a significant part to play in supporting all kinds of worship leading and lay preaching, through their Training and Development Officers, Lay Preaching Commissioners, education/discipleship/ministries committees, and TLS Regional Organisers where these still exist.
- 6.2 Some synods have offered the same level of financial support to synod-recognised Lay Preachers as is available to Assembly-accredited Lay Preachers. Synods often organise conferences and events which are open to anyone wishing to develop their confidence and competence in leading worship, regardless of being recognised or accredited as a Lay Preacher.
- 6.3 Clearly, synods are also key to the development of Stepwise as a locally supported discipleship development programme with five streams, including faith-filled worship.

7. Taking forward the best qualities of the current system

- a. *Starting where people are:* Development from within the context of congregations creates a strong foundation which can be built upon in ways that suit individual and local needs, strengths, resources and conditions. There are opportunities built into the system to encounter disciples with contrasting expectations and experiences.
- b. *Comparability between synods:* Prior to the introduction of LITE (Local Introductory Training Experiences) each synod had its own programme for preparing people for leading worship locally. These programmes varied and so LITE responded to a demand for a self-contained, easily accessed, locally available set of courses with in-built consistency. One synod has recently designed its own course which can result in synod-recognition, although most continue to use LITE.
- c. *Progression:* Since 2016, *Transitional TLS* has been a way of someone undertaking LITE and having the option of either seeking synod-recognition on completion or progressing to Assembly-accreditation as a Lay Preacher through further study and practice.
- d. *Flexibility, consistency and rigour:* These apparently contradictory aspects are observed and valued in the current system. Using TLS as the standard (in its previous form and currently in transitional TLS) has made it possible to acknowledge the previous learning and experience which individuals have evidenced when seeking synod-recognition or non-standard progression to Assembly-accreditation. The URC is a small Church and can respond to individual circumstances through the insights of local church, synod, and General Assembly.

- e. *Leadership development*: synod-recognition and Assembly-accreditation give individuals and their synods some confidence that the person can be called upon to exercise leadership locally in an accountable way. They exercise a ministry on behalf of the whole church, in widening circles of influence and responsibility if called to do so and if a vocation to this is discerned.

8. Ecumenical considerations

- 8.1 Assembly-Accreditation by the URC is recognised by the Methodist Church as being equivalent to a Local Preacher with mutual recognition of each other's training routes. Someone who has trained through the other denomination's route is able to complete an additional module to show that they understand the ethos of the Methodist Church or URC in order to be accepted by that church as Local Preacher or Assembly-accredited Lay Preacher respectively.
- 8.2 The URC has similar ways of recognising prior learning of people who have trained as an Anglican Reader. The ecumenical equivalence of synod-recognition is not applied consistently.
- 8.3 Steps are currently being taken to assist Methodist Local Preachers meetings to understand and accept synod-recognition, in conjunction with the appropriate officers of the Methodist Connexion. Ecumenical equivalence is yet to be fully explored with other Churches across the three nations of the URC, on a denomination by denomination basis, or within ecumenical alliances e.g. EMU (Episcopal, Methodist, United Reformed Church) in Scotland.

9. The proposed system using Stepwise

- 9.1 Through engagement with their local faith-filled life Stepwise group and discussion with their Stepwise mentor in exploring what discipleship means for them, it is anticipated that some people will come to feel that they would like to develop their skills in leading worship and helping to break open the Word. The routes through which they will be able to pursue this from autumn 2020 using Stepwise are described in Appendix A. The key features of the proposed system are:
 - i. There will be local, seedbed development – Stepwise faith-filled worship will be available for people who simply want to develop their abilities to lead worship and preach where they are, for the benefit of their local congregation(s) without seeking synod-recognition or Assembly-accreditation;
 - ii. Synod-recognition will become the accepted initial destination of everyone seeking to be known publicly as a lay preacher in the URC and will be transferable between synods. Subsequent progression to Assembly-accreditation will be one means among others of encouraging further development.
 - iii. The standards for worship leading and preaching to be used throughout the denomination for Lay Preachers will be those associated with Stepwise.

10. Routes other than Stepwise

- 10.1 Someone called to lay preaching in the URC may have had relevant training from another denomination or education and experience elsewhere. A synod may feel that the person is ready for synod-recognition, when measured against the Stepwise standards agreed and published by the education and learning committee. It would be for the synod to make such a decision and synod-recognition remains an important step.
- 10.2 Where an experienced person seeks progression to Assembly-accreditation through routes other than Stepwise the synod will make an application on their behalf to the URC studies panel¹ for recognition of prior learning. The Stepwise route to Assembly-accreditation will be the standard against which the prior learning of applicants is calibrated.

11. Continuing development for lay preachers

- 11.1 Times and contexts change, and it is important that people who are entrusted to break open God's Word with congregations are continually nourished in their hearts and minds, as has been reiterated in the Worship Research Project report of 2019. An increasing emphasis on local leadership of congregations requires that resources are devoted to re-equipping lay preachers to take on new roles as these emerge.
- 11.2 The URC will look to synods and Resource Centres for Learning to continue to offer development opportunities through local events, and regular lay preaching conferences. Peer support is also important and strengthening of local and regional networks of worship leaders and lay preachers is something that synods have encouraged.
- 11.3 A specific area where local equipping is of particular relevance is that of preparing lay preachers to conduct occasional offices. Synods already prepare people to be authorised for presiding at the sacraments of communion and baptism. Some synods and the Resource Centres for Learning are also offering training in presiding at funerals.
- 11.4 It would seem best to continue and develop this provision as it is, rather than try and include it as a core part of the Stepwise faith-filled worship stream. Such skills and knowledge are best addressed when people find themselves required and ready to exercise them.
- 11.5 Continuing development opportunities would be helped if there were a standard pattern of assistance across synods, perhaps supported by a combination of synod and Assembly funds.

¹ The URC Studies Panel, meeting electronically, is chaired by the Convenor of the education and learning committee and includes the Secretaries for education and learning and Ministries, the Stepwise Programme Manager, the Convenor of the Stepwise Learning Standards Board, and the Assembly Advocate for Leading Worship.

12. What happens for people currently in TLS transition?

- 12.1 Transitional TLS is currently still available. TLS LITE and LITE PLUS continue to be offered, and Gateways into Worship is running for the final time in the academic year 2019/20. Anyone who has been given synod-recognition through TLS-LITE or other equivalent routes will be able to seek progression to Assembly-recognition if they so choose, using the Stepwise route described in Appendix A or its equivalent as described in section ten above.

Appendix A

1. Stepwise and Lay Preaching: a proposal

- 1.1 Through engagement with the local Stepwise group and discussion with their Stepwise mentor in exploring what discipleship means for them, it is anticipated that some people will come to feel that they would like to develop their skills in leading worship and breaking open the word, i.e. wrestling with the Bible and drawing meaning from it for today. This is as much about facilitating discussion, prayer, reflection, and teaching as it is about preaching a sermon.
- 1.2 The following proposal is written as if:
- it is autumn 2020 and all the Stepwise streams are available;
 - the proposal is addressed to an individual;
 - the individual has completed faith-filled life previously
 - the individual has discerned a calling to develop their skills in leading worship

2. Working on the fine detail

- 2.1 There is further work to do, to make this proposal into a thorough and sustainable scheme which can cope with the range of expectations from local congregations, synods and ecumenical partners. Acceptance of the outline ideas within it by Mission Council in November 2019 will enable the education and learning and ministries committees to work with relevant synod committees to provide the necessary guidance and agreements on practice by autumn 2020.

3. Becoming a Lay Preacher in the URC (from autumn 2020)

If you simply want to be better at leading worship in your local church

3.1 You would complete the core of faith-filled worship through the usual means. Beyond the core blended learning you could choose to undertake additional activities for your own development:

- i. producing a portfolio of evidence during faith-filled worship through assignments which help you to reflect on your experience and skill development;
- ii. an assessed service at the end of the stream which you can ask to be conducted to give you feedback on your progress.

If you feel called to become a Lay Preacher in the URC

3.2 Everyone seeking to become a Lay Preacher in the URC will be expected to seek synod-recognition in the first instance.

3.3 You will complete the core of faith-filled worship through the usual means. In addition you will be required to:

- i. produce a portfolio of evidence during faith-filled worship through assignments which help you to reflect on your experience and skill development;
- ii. undertake an assessed service at the end of the stream. If your synod is satisfied with your competence according to URC-wide standards they will grant you synod-recognition as a Lay Preacher. This will be subject to you meeting safeguarding requirements set by the URC for synod-recognised Lay Preachers.

3.4 Synod-recognition will be transferable to other synods if you subsequently move. All synods will be expected to provide a reasonable and consistent level of resourcing for the continuing development of synod-recognised Lay Preachers. They will be helped to do so, where necessary, from the URC's Discipleship Development Fund and the Inter-Synod Resource Sharing Scheme.

Progression to seeking Assembly-accreditation

3.5 For many people it will be enough to be synod-recognised as a Lay Preacher. However, progression has the following advantages for individuals and the United Reformed Church:

- i. developing an individual's abilities
- ii. formal acknowledgement of the deepening and broadening of competence
- iii. greater flexibility in lay ministry to meet a variety of contexts
- iv. ecumenical equivalence to Licensed Lay Ministers/Readers in the Anglican Church and Local Preachers in the Methodist Church.

3.6 There are two parts to progression:

- a. While serving as a synod-recognised Lay Preacher you will need to show evidence of having conducted a minimum of 12 services of worship, within a period of 12 to 24 months, in a range of styles and settings.

Your synod will be encouraged to provide an experienced worship leader to spend two to three sessions helping you to reflect on your strengths and development needs as a Lay Preacher, in order to decide which of the Stepwise Streams is the most appropriate for you to pursue. This could be the person who was your mentor for faith-filled worship or it may be someone else set aside for the purpose.

- b. You will then be expected to complete one of the other Stepwise Streams, or a programme of equal rigour and depth. The stream you choose will depend on:
 - i. the possibilities and needs of the context that you and the synod have agreed is where your calling lies;
 - ii. the experience you already have, so either deepening what you've already done in a subject area or branching out into a new subject area.

The portfolio that you create in this stream will relate to the ministry of leading worship and preaching. Having completed the stream, you will have another assessed service. If the synod, representing the Assembly, is satisfied with this and the evidence from your portfolio they will recommend you to the existing routes for Assembly accreditation. This is essentially commendation from the URC education and learning committee to the URC ministries committee, which then grants Assembly accreditation as a Lay Preacher. This is under the authority of the General Assembly.

- 3.7 Assembly-accreditation is valid throughout the whole of the URC. Once accredited, you will be eligible to apply for a reasonable and consistent level of resourcing for your continuing development from the relevant committee of General Assembly, through your synod.

Appendix B

Current recognition of Lay Preachers in the URC (September 2019)

As mentioned above, the term “Lay Preacher” is not always a helpful term, although widely used and understood in the URC. For the sake of clarity, it is the term used in this paper. It should be remembered that the elders meeting of any United Reformed Church congregation or pastorate is free to ask anyone they wish to lead worship, other than presiding at the Sacraments.

The United Reformed Church has reached a situation of having two kinds of “lay preacher”: Synod-recognised and Assembly-accredited. (In some cases, synod-recognised is known as locally-recognised.) What follows below is a description of how the normal system works currently.

Synod-recognised Lay Preachers usually pursue a programme of training which takes about 12 months through their synod. In many synods this consists of a series of five Local Introductory Training Experience ([LITE](#)) courses taken in small groups close to their home church, with assignments to be completed.

Having successfully conducted an assessed service the applicant will usually be recognised by the synod and listed in their year book as a lay preacher. Someone recognised in their own synod as a lay preacher is not automatically recognised as such if they move to a different synod. The financial support for ongoing development of synod-recognised Lay Preachers varies between synods.

Assembly-accredited Lay Preachers pursue a programme known as *Transitional TLS* which takes three years and is overseen by both their synod and the education and learning committee of the General Assembly, the URC's ruling body. The first year requires completion of four of the five LITE courses designated for synod-recognised lay preachers, with a different and more stretching set of assignments.

The second year consists of the 'Gateways into Worship' course, completed over an academic year (September to June). This is tutored within the synod and includes a residential weekend in each of three terms; a supervised placement with a local church other than the student's own; and completion of a number of assignments marked centrally.

The third year of mentored reflective practice is designed to give the potential preacher a wide experience of shaping and leading different kinds of worship with the support of an experienced mentor. **www.urc.org.uk/tls-page**

There are assessed services at two points – at the end of 'Gateways into Worship' (to give feedback on progress) and at the end of the year of mentored reflective practice (to decide if the required standard for Assembly-accreditation has been met).

Assembly-accreditation is transferable to wherever the preacher finds themselves in the United Reformed Church, and it is also recognised by ecumenical partners. Assembly-accredited Lay Preachers are eligible to apply for up to £200 per year towards their ongoing development. Information on this can be found **at www.urc.org.uk/assembly-accredited-lay-preachers**

Paper G1

Budget for 2020

Finance committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie ianzhardie@googlemail.com John Piper john.piper30@ntworld.com
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council adopts the 2020 budget as set out in the Appendix to paper G1 for November 2019 Mission Council.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper presents a 2020 budget for decision and financial projections for 2021 and 2022 for information.
Main points	<p>M&M giving is forecast to be less than 1% lower than the 2019 budget figure while the response from most synods to the plea for pension fund support has exceeded expectations.</p> <p>Overall expenditure is expected to be around £80,000 more than the 2019 budget figure, entirely due to one-off or temporary increases being forecast by several departments.</p> <p>This results in a forecast deficit of £70,110 for 2020.</p> <p>The projections for 2021 and 2022 assume no major changes, although some are likely. The URC faces serious pension issues which could have a significant impact on pension costs and/or investment income from 2021 onwards. A consultation process about these issues is getting underway (see separate paper G3). It is hoped that some indication of the way forward will be available in time for consideration of next year's budget.</p> <p>Otherwise, the projections are potentially manageable at this stage.</p>
Previous documents	Paper G1 for November 2018 Mission Council.
Consultation has taken place with...	Budget holders and the URC Trust.

Summary of impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

1. Column three of the attached Appendix sets out the draft budget for 2020 which the finance committee presents to Mission Council. This budget has been reviewed by the URC Trustees and has their support.

Income

2. Over 90% of the income comes from local churches through their contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund ('M&M'). Estimates for 2020 received from synods over the summer suggest that total giving next year will be less than 1% down on the budget figure for 2019. The continuing decline in URC membership means that this once again represents an increase in average giving per member to the M&M fund.
3. During the first six months of 2019 synods provided additional pension funding which already exceeds the budget estimate for the year. Accordingly, we have increased our budget forecast for 2020 to £300,000.
4. Now that the remedial work on Church House is behind us, the committee anticipates the third-floor flat being let throughout 2020.

Stipends and ministers

5. More than two-thirds of our expenditure relates to paying stipends and directly related costs of ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers in local settings.
6. Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the stipend to the finance committee in conjunction with the URC Trustees. The recommended rise for 2020, which is built into this budget, is 2.7%. This increase has been calculated using a formula applied consistently for a number of years based on the consumer price index and average weekly earnings movements at consistent annual rests. Such a rise would increase the stipend by £720 to £27,600.
7. The 2020 budget assumes a net decrease of three ministers in the year, with retirements slightly exceeding the expected ten ordinations and four ministers of other denominations being given Certificates of Eligibility to enable them to transfer permanently to the URC roll of ministers. The total cost of ministry is quite a bit higher than the expected actual cost in 2019, but is almost £25,000 below the 2019 budget.

Other expenditure

8. The education and learning budget is forecast to reduce by £140,000. This is mainly due to the expected reduction in student numbers and related grant costs.

9. However, the children and youth work budget is expected to increase by £34,000. Of this sum, £18,000* represents half the costs of an 18 month-long Messy Church project which the department wishes to undertake during 2020 and 2021. Another £8,000 is a sum which the department would like to be able to call on should it become necessary for safeguarding reasons to hire the whole of the venue where the Youth Assembly will take place in 2020.
10. The safeguarding budget has been increased by around £74,000. £47,000* of this represents the costs of engaging two people on temporary contracts to provide additional resource at a time when the Safeguarding Officer will be heavily involved in the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, which is now turning attention to the URC, among other denominations and faith groups, and to provide training to synods and local churches. Another £40,000 increase is the current estimate of extra resources that may be required in each of the next three years to support synods in delivering the safeguarding policy. Against this, the cost of digitising ministerial records is not required next year.
11. The total mission budget has increased by £29,000, £24,000 of this reflects the decision at May Mission Council to provide continued support of that amount for Greenbelt. (In 2019 this sum was within the central secretariat budget.)
12. The finance department is budgeting £10,000* for a one-off payroll system upgrade following news that support for the current version is stopping next year and another £10,000* for a much-needed in-depth VAT review.
13. Communications hope to recruit a Digital Content Officer in place of a graphics assistant. The human resources advisory group has yet to discuss this proposal but we have included a net increase of £28,000 in the budget as a precaution. Communications also expects to spend an additional £10,000* in 2020 on improving iChurch in what is seen as a make or break year for the product. It is hoped this will improve the appeal of iChurch within and beyond the URC.
14. The amounts stated above marked with asterisks are those which the committee regards as temporary or one-off expenditure increases. They total £95,000. Without such one-off items the budget would show a small surplus instead of a deficit of £70,110.

Resolution

15. Subject to the need to amend the draft budget as a result of the ongoing safeguarding discussions, the committee proposes the resolution set out above.

Projections for 2021 and 2022

16. The project for tackling the URC's various pension schemes issues is the subject of a separate paper to Mission Council (paper G3). The project's outcomes are currently uncertain, but are likely to involve increased pension costs and/or a reduction of investment income for the URC Trust (and perhaps some of the synods) as a result of capital being re-allocated to the pension funds. But we do not yet know how in practice the URC family will decide to address these challenges. It is hoped to reach agreement in principle about this by the summer of 2020. This would enable the 2021 budget to be prepared on a better-informed

basis than is possible at present. In the meantime the projections for 2021 and 2022 take no account of any such possibilities.

17. The projections for these years are shown in the final two columns in the Appendix. These are not based on detailed discussions with every budget holder but incorporate estimated adjustment for likely changes within major budget categories. Accordingly, these figures should at best be regarded as very rough approximations only.
18. In both years we have projected a drop of 1% in M&M giving and 2.5% increases in stipends and staff salaries. "*Walking the Way*" will no longer be funded from CWM in 2021; for the moment we have put the programme officer costs in the projected funding for that year, should the URC decide it will fund the post itself. General Assembly costs for 2021 reflect the decisions taken at the 2018 General Assembly but Mission Council costs are at present based on the current pattern.
19. Subject to what is said in paragraph 16 above, the projections are potentially manageable at present.

Appendix

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
Ministry & Mission Fund
Summary Budget and Projections 2020 to 2022

Department/ Project	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	Actual	Budget	Budget	Projection	Projection
	£	£	£	£	£
Income					
Ministry and Mission contributions	(19,016,107)	(18,651,000)	(18,476,500)	(18,292,000)	(18,109,000)
Pensions - additional funding	0	(200,000)	(300,000)	(300,000)	(300,000)
Investment and other income					
Dividends	(920,122)	(895,000)	(925,000)	(934,000)	(943,000)
Donations	(6,595)	0	0	0	0
Specific legacies	(431)	0	0	0	0
Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fu	(286,945)	(260,000)	(288,000)	(291,000)	(294,000)
Net other interest & bank charges	(7,291)	(6,000)	(8,000)	(8,000)	(8,000)
Other income, including property rentals	(126,368)	(139,000)	(162,400)	(163,000)	(163,000)
	(1,347,752)	(1,300,000)	(1,383,400)	(1,396,000)	(1,408,000)
Total income	(20,363,859)	(20,151,000)	(20,159,900)	(19,988,000)	(19,817,000)
Expenditure					
Discipleship Dept.					
Ministry					
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	13,495,559	13,755,700	13,698,000	13,468,000	13,187,000
Synod Moderators - stipends and expens	669,632	718,000	739,000	748,000	761,000
Ministries department	335,911	323,200	334,600	340,600	352,600
Pastoral & welfare	846	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
	14,501,948	14,798,900	14,773,600	14,558,600	14,302,600
Education & Learning					
Initial training for ministry	599,467	710,500	547,570	547,570	547,570
Continuing training for ministry	75,474	106,000	95,500	95,500	95,500
Resource Centres support	614,948	619,000	638,640	655,000	671,000
	1,289,889	1,435,500	1,281,710	1,298,070	1,314,070
TLS/Stepwise	107,189	113,000	121,600	103,000	107,000
Lay preachers support	4,650	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000
On-line learning	52,859	61,000	60,000	61,000	63,000
Lay Development	1,443	20,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Education & Learning department	181,740	170,000	168,000	172,000	180,000
	1,637,770	1,806,500	1,663,310	1,666,070	1,696,070
Children's and Youth Work					
Staff costs	193,487	214,000	216,500	221,500	231,500
Management, resources and programme	69,768	80,200	111,200	111,200	93,200
	263,255	294,200	327,700	332,700	324,700
Safeguarding					
Safeguarding policy and practice	148,525	104,000	179,500	166,500	168,300
Discipleship Secretariat					
Deputy General Secretary - Discipleship	67,052	80,000	83,600	85,600	89,600
Mission Dept.					
Mission dept staff and core costs	448,781	530,500	529,200	540,200	562,200
Mission programmes and memberships	164,292	220,000	250,200	318,800	316,800
	613,073	750,500	779,400	859,000	879,000
National Ecumenical Officers	20,335	36,500	36,500	38,500	42,500
	633,408	787,000	815,900	897,500	921,500
Administration & Resources Dept.			28,900		
Central Secretariat	241,695	283,000	270,500	273,500	283,500
Facilities	438,811	348,000	385,000	389,000	397,000
Human Resources	80,503	82,500	89,000	91,000	95,000
IT Services	201,949	226,200	237,700	240,700	246,700
Finance	425,741	395,862	405,400	393,400	401,400
Communications	374,641	431,000	464,800	462,800	484,800
	1,763,340	1,766,562	1,852,400	1,850,400	1,908,400
Governance					
General Assembly	120,537	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Mission Council	70,020	55,500	63,000	58,000	58,000
Professional fees	72,342	94,000	100,000	95,000	95,000
Other	73,248	70,000	76,000	73,000	73,000
	336,146	319,500	339,000	326,000	326,000
Apprenticeship levy	46,095	54,000	55,000	55,000	55,000
Irrecoverable VAT	110,768	140,000	140,000	140,000	140,000
Total expenditure	19,508,307	20,150,662	20,230,010	20,078,370	19,932,170
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	855,553	338	(70,110)	(90,370)	(115,170)

Paper G2

URC Ethical Investment Guidelines

Finance committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ian Hardie ianzhardie@googlemail.com Dick Gray dickgray643@gmail.com
Action required	To note.
Draft resolution(s)	

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To update Mission Council on the steps taken to comply with the resolution passed at May Mission Council re disinvestment from fossil fuels.
Main points	CCLA's COIF Charities Ethical Investment Fund will have disinvested from all fossil fuel extraction companies by 1 December 2019. The URC Ethical Investment Guidelines have been rewritten to reflect the May Mission Council decision.
Previous relevant documents	Paper X1 for May 2019 Mission Council. The previous version of the Ethical Investment Guidelines – last printed as an Annex to Paper Z1 for May 2019 Mission Council.
Consultation has taken place with...	CCLA The URC investment committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	Minimal.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The change in CCLA's policy is seen by many investors with concerns about the current climate emergency as a major move towards protecting the environment.

1. In May 2019 Mission Council resolved (among other things):
 - a) not to invest in companies more than 10% of whose turnover derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels
 - b) to complete the divestment required to fulfill this decision by the time General Assembly meets in 2020
 - c) to update the URC's Ethical Investment Guidelines to reflect the new policy.

2. At a meeting later that same month the Board of CCLA – the investment managers of the COIF Charities Ethical Investment Fund through which the URC Trust had exposure to fossil fuel companies – decided that this fund would cease to invest in fossil fuel companies and would do so by no later than 1 December 2019. Mission Council’s resolution in May had been made known to CCLA and is believed to have influenced their decision.
3. They wished to speak to the companies in which they had held such investments before making their decision generally known, but the change of policy was announced publicly on 15 July 2019.
4. As a result, the URC Trust’s investments will be in compliance with the wishes of Mission Council considerably before the July 2020 deadline for compliance.
5. The URC’s finance and investment committees have updated the Ethical Investment Guidelines as requested. Annex one to this paper shows a marked version of the changes which have been made and Annex two provides a clean copy of the updated version of the guidelines as they now stand.

Annex one

Ethical Investment Policy

Statements 2010-~~17~~19

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 1 and 2 and ~~an~~ amendments made in 2017 and 2019. A revised Recommended Mandate for Investors taking account of these is attached as Appendix 3.

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 9 of the URC's Mission Framework¹;
 - 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:

¹ 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

- contribute to the oppressive nature of regimes which are guilty of gross human rights violations;
 - 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; and
 - 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.² 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; and
 - micro-credit based social development programmes.

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

² See Vision 2020 – planning for growth in the URC at http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/images/vision2020_booklet_colour.pdf

³ Cited in EIRIS/UKSIF Charity Project, Responsible Investment Approaches to Non-Equity Investments: An Introduction for Charity Trustees, 2006, www.charityysri.org

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 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], **which** 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

At its meeting in November 2015 Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly resolved to add a substantial statement as an Appendix to the 2010 statement of principles asking those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the URC to

- engage with companies making a significant contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions to encourage the shift to a low carbon economy (working with other investors where possible);
- avoid investment in companies significantly engaged in certain extractive activities; disinvest, after appropriate engagement, from companies contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and not judged to be taking seriously their responsibilities to assist the transition to a low carbon economy;
- increase investment in climate change adaptation and entities facilitating a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions or a transition to a low carbon economy;
- encourage their investment managers to build climate change into their investment practices and processes; and
- monitor and report periodically on the policy.

~~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);

- ~~e) 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."~~

The following Resolution was agreed by Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, at its meeting in May 2019.

“Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, agrees that the ethical investment guidelines on climate change issues be updated to reflect the following:

In the light of the climate emergency, 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 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.”**

Accordingly, the 2015 text of Appendix 2 has now been amended to reads 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 (e.g., the transport and distribution sectors), and producers of energy intensive products (e.g., cement)) 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 fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas or oil 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 further 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 **fossil fuels including thermal coal, natural gas and oil** 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 **November 2019**

Annex two

Ethical Investment Policy statements 2010-19

Mission Council, meeting in March 2010, received a report on ethical investment principles for 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'.*

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 - 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 9 of the URC's Mission Framework⁴;
 - 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.
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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:

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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.⁵ The following social investments have considerable overlap with ethical investment portfolios and may sometimes offer market rate investments:
- community land and reinvestment trusts;
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 - organic food and fair trade initiatives; and
 - micro-credit based social development programmes.

In supporting any such initiative, URC Trust bodies should be satisfied that effective governance monitoring is in place.⁶

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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], which 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

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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

At its meeting in November 2015 Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly resolved to add a substantial statement as an Appendix to the 2010 statement of principles asking those responsible for investment decisions on behalf of the URC to

- engage with companies making a significant contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions to encourage the shift to a low carbon economy (working with other investors where possible);
- avoid investment in companies significantly engaged in certain extractive activities; disinvest, after appropriate engagement, from companies contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and not judged to be taking seriously their responsibilities to assist the transition to a low carbon economy;
- increase investment in climate change adaptation and entities facilitating a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions or a transition to a low carbon economy;
- encourage their investment managers to build climate change into their investment practices and processes; and
- monitor and report periodically on the policy.

The following resolution was agreed by Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, at its meeting in May 2019.

“Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, agrees that the ethical investment guidelines on climate change issues be updated to reflect the following:

In the light of the climate emergency, 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 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.”**

Accordingly, the 2015 text of Appendix 2 has now been amended to reads 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 electricity generation utilities, large energy users (e.g., the transport and distribution sectors), and producers of energy intensive products (e.g., cement)) 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 fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas or oil 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 further 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;
- 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 fossil fuels including thermal coal, natural gas and oil 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.

November 2019

Paper G3

URC pension schemes – integrated risk management project

Pensions executive and finance committee

Basic information

Contact names and email addresses	John Piper john.piper30@ntlworld.com Chris Evans chris.evans@thestyle.net
Action required	None – for information only at this stage; an extensive process of consultation is ahead, as explained in the paper.
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The URC faces some serious and potentially costly challenges in relation to its two pension schemes. The integrated risk management (IRM) Project is a way of reviewing, in a holistic way, all these issues for both pension schemes so that the URC as ‘employer’ and the trustees of the two schemes can agree on appropriate action. The aim of this paper is to summarise the challenges, and to describe the IRM project including the process of extensive consultation which is just beginning.
Main points	<p>The URC has two pension schemes. Both are Defined Benefit (DB) schemes, which means that the benefits for each member are based on their length of service and their final salary / stipend. All costs, except for member contributions, and all risks are carried by the employer. (See 1.1. to 1.3.)</p> <p>The cost of all DB schemes continues to increase, because of the persistent historically low interest rates. This increases the cost of future benefits but it also increases the risk of further costs in relation to benefits already earned. (see 5.3.)</p> <p>The requirements of the Pensions Regulator are becoming much more onerous for all DB pension schemes. This is partly in response to recent failures of commercial enterprises leaving their pension schemes with insufficient funds to meet their obligations. The main issues are set out in 5.4 to 5.7. In summary, the Regulator is wanting to reduce the risks to scheme members by a combination of higher levels of funding,</p>

	<p>less risky investment strategies and stronger guarantees from employers.</p> <p>The IRM project is a way of assessing all the risks and other issues involved in the provision of pensions in a holistic way (as many of them are inter-related) and trying to agree a way forward which is acceptable to all parties. The process of consultation will involve representatives of the URC Trust and all the Synod Trusts and then all the associated councils of the Church. This process will take some time and, hence, this paper to Mission Council is for information only at this stage.</p>
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod Treasurers.

Summary of impact

Financial	None at the moment.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The trustees of the Final Salary Scheme for lay staff.

This paper is set out as follows:

Section	Contents
1	The two URC pension schemes
2	Legal responsibilities and regulations
3	Coping with uncertainty and managing risk
4	Actuarial valuations and pension scheme deficits
5	A summary of the challenges we face
6	The Integrated Risk Management (IRM) project and consultation process

1. The two URC pension schemes

1.1 Defined Benefit (DB) pension schemes

The URC operates two pension schemes – one for ministers and church related community workers and the other primarily for lay staff. Both these schemes are Defined Benefit (DB) schemes. This means that the benefits of each member are determined by their years of service and their final salary/stipend. Apart from member contributions, all the costs and all the risks are with the employer. For each month that a person works, the employer and the individual make contributions into the pension fund. These contributions are invested. The size of the contributions is calculated by the actuary (see section 4) based on a projection of the cost of delivering the person's pension entitlement throughout their retirement. This projection is based on assumptions about investment returns, inflation, and mortality among other things. If the actual cost is higher than the projected cost then the employer has to pay the difference.

The most common alternative to a Defined Benefit scheme is a Defined Contribution scheme. Here, it is the contributions paid into the pension scheme which are fixed. Those contributions are invested. When a person retires their personal pension fund may be used to purchase an annuity which pays them a pension. Recent government legislation has introduced other more flexible options. In this case all the risks are transferred from the employer to the member.

1.2 URC Ministers' Pension Scheme

The URC Ministers' Pension Scheme is almost exclusively providing for the pensions of URC ministers and church related community workers. A very small number of ecumenical bodies have become participating employers because they have employed URC ministers.

The URC Ministers' Pension Scheme is managed 'in house', albeit through an independent trust company. The URC Ministers' Pensions Trust Limited (URC MPT) acts as trustee of the scheme. All the directors of the URC MPT are URC members.

1.3 URC Final Salary Scheme

The URC Final Salary Scheme is primarily for lay staff employed by the URC plus a small number of ministers. Around two thirds of the members are past or present employees at Church House. The remainder of the members are past or present employees of Northern College and some of the synods. This means that some of the synods are participating employers in this scheme, with associated legal responsibilities.

The URC Final Salary Scheme is managed externally by TPT Retirement Solutions (formerly known as The Pensions Trust). TPT acts as the scheme trustee. TPT consults with the URC as employer, but TPT makes the decisions about the scheme.

1.4 The URC pension schemes are becoming more mature

The value of the assets of the URC Ministers' Pension Scheme doubled over the nine years up to the last actuarial valuation. Its liabilities also increased in proportion. However, the number of pensioners receiving pensions from the scheme is slowly increasing whereas the number of active members is reducing. As a result of this, the total value of annual benefits paid out by the scheme now slightly exceeds the value of contributions being paid into the scheme. So, the size of the assets and liabilities of the scheme has started to reduce. The rate of this reduction will increase over time.

The same trend is happening with the Final Salary Scheme for lay staff, though at a slower pace. Here, the number of active members has remained fairly static. The annual contributions paid into this Scheme are still slightly higher than the annual benefits paid out.

1.5 URC Pensions Executive

The URC Pensions Executive is liaising with the trustees of both pensions schemes on behalf of the URC.

2. Legal responsibilities and regulations

2.1 The Pensions Regulator

Parliament enacts legislation which provides a framework for the operation of pensions schemes. The Pensions Regulator is then responsible for providing detailed guidelines and for monitoring the compliance of both trustees and employers.

The Pensions Regulator has recently been very active in issuing new guidelines on a piecemeal basis. New comprehensive draft guidelines were meant to be issued for consultation in the autumn of 2019. However, these were supposed to be preceded by a new pensions Act of Parliament and, not surprisingly, this has been delayed. This leaves trustees and employers in a difficult and uncertain position in trying to foresee and plan for what the future requirements of the Pensions Regulator will be.

The requirements of the Pensions Regulator are becoming increasingly onerous on trustees and employers. The Regulator is, in part, responding to problems that have arisen in practice which have put the security of people's pensions at risk. The Regulator is particularly concerned with the potential for employers to fail or become unable to meet their legal responsibilities in relation to their pensions schemes; the proportion of income being used to meet pensions costs compared, for example, with the proportion used to pay dividends; the investment risks being taken by pensions trustees; and the particular cash flow problems that can arise with maturing schemes.

As an example of this, the Regulator's compliance team have still not accepted the results of the 2018 actuarial valuation of the Ministers' Pension Fund (the results of which were reported to Mission Council in November 2018, paper G2). This is in spite of the fact that the actuary and the trustee and the URC Pensions Executive were of the view that we had taken a slightly more prudent approach than in the previous valuations, and that the deficit on the Ministers' Pension Fund had reduced much faster than expected at the time of the previous valuation. See 5.4.

2.2 Responsibilities of the trustee

The primary responsibility of the trustee of a Defined Benefit pension scheme (and of the Pensions Regulator) is to ensure that the benefits that have already been earned will be paid when they are due. This responsibility involves, among other things, deciding on an appropriate investment strategy; agreeing with the actuary and the employer on an appropriate funding level; and monitoring the financial strength of the URC as employer and its ability to meet its present and future obligations (referred to as the 'employer covenant' by the Regulator and those involved in managing pension schemes).

2.3 Responsibilities of the employer

As already described, the employer is legally responsible for paying the benefits already earned by members of a Defined Benefit scheme – whatever the cost. If the money

already invested in the pension fund proves to be insufficient then the employer is legally obliged to provide the difference.

The failure of some employers to meet their responsibilities to their pension funds, whether by accident or design, is the background to the increasingly onerous regulation.

The employer is also generally responsible for deciding what pensions benefits will be offered to scheme members in the future, albeit in accordance with the scheme rules. It is, therefore, important for the employer to keep under review the continued appropriateness as well as the affordability of the present arrangements. See 5.3.

3. Coping with uncertainty and managing risk

3.1 Risk is inherent and unavoidable

The purpose of pension schemes is to invest money paid by employers and scheme members now in order to pay pensions to scheme members in the future. Those pensions might be payable 70 years after the money has been paid over to the scheme. Uncertainty and risk are, therefore, unavoidable and significant elements of the operation of pension schemes – especially defined benefit schemes.

The Pensions Regulator is always seeking to minimise these risks. One of the primary roles of the trustee, in consultation with the employer, is to manage these risks.

3.2 Risks associated with the assets

Money paid now for pensions that might be payable long into the future has to be invested. Investments carry risks often in proportion to their likely returns. Low risks usually mean low returns which mean the cost of pensions rises. Higher returns usually involve taking higher risks. To enjoy long term higher returns, the employer has to be able to cope with the risk of short term falls in value caused by fluctuations in the financial markets.

Whatever investment strategy is adopted, there will always be a degree of uncertainty about what the value of the assets will be at the time when the liabilities have to be met. The trustee and the employer have to strike a balance, taking a long-term view.

3.3 Risks associated with the liabilities

Although, as explained above, the benefits to be paid by a defined benefit scheme are pre-defined, that does not mean that they are known.

Every month worked by a member of a defined benefit scheme entitles them to a fixed percentage of their final salary/stipend as a monthly pension from the date when they retire. The main uncertainties are around inflation and life expectancy. What will that final salary/stipend be? For how many years will the member or the member's spouse or dependents receive a pension?

3.4 Risks associated with the employer

For the Pensions Regulator and the trustee, a key issue is the strength of what is called the employer covenant. How likely is it that the employer will be able to meet its

obligations? It is important to remember that this is primarily in relation to the benefits already earned by members of the defined benefit schemes for their past service, and not about what benefits might be earned in the future.

The risk is that the money already provided may prove to be insufficient and the issue is that the employer may then be unable to pay what is needed. The Pensions Regulator is increasingly concerned about this, not least because of the number of employers who have disappeared leaving their staff pension schemes significantly underfunded.

4. Actuarial valuations and pension scheme deficits

4.1 General

Every three years, a defined benefit pension scheme is subject to an actuarial valuation by an independent actuary. The assets and liabilities of the scheme are estimated, taking account of all the risks and uncertainties mentioned above and many others. Expected investment returns and expectations of inflation are key factors.

The effective date of these valuations is fixed for each scheme. This means that a valuation can be affected by a short-term fluctuation in the financial markets. Nevertheless, the results of the valuation determine the level of contributions required to be paid into the scheme for the three years until the next valuation.

There is more than one way of putting values on the assets and liabilities. The 'technical provisions' basis is based on what are considered to be a prudent set of assumptions and is the one normally used to determine the rate of future contributions. At the moment, these assumptions are agreed for each scheme between the actuary, the trustee and the employer. This is one area where the new regulatory guidance may be more prescriptive than it is at present.

The most prudent valuation is called the 'solvency basis', which is defined by regulation. It is, in effect, the cost of selling the scheme's liabilities to an insurance company, which then takes on all the legal responsibility for, and the risks of, paying the benefits earned.

4.2 Dealing with deficits

If the valuation of the liabilities is higher than the valuation of the assets, then there is a deficit on the pension scheme. Based upon the assumptions used by the actuary, the scheme does not yet have enough money to pay the benefits that its members have already earned.

If there is a deficit on a scheme, then a 'recovery plan' is agreed with the employer which requires additional deficit contributions to be paid into the scheme over a number of years until the deficit is eliminated.

4.3 Schedule of contributions

A key outcome of each actuarial valuation is a 'schedule of contributions' agreed between the actuary, the scheme trustee, and the employer. This sets out the

contributions that will be paid into the scheme by the employer and by the members. This schedule remains operational until a new one is agreed, usually after the next actuarial valuation.

The URC is currently paying future service contributions and deficit contributions on both of its pension schemes.

4.4 URC Ministers' Pension Scheme

The last actuarial valuation of the Ministers' Pension Scheme took place as at 1 January 2018. On the technical provisions basis, the deficit was estimated at £3.9 million on assets of £140 million. This compared with a deficit of £16.6 million three years previously. The actuary and the URC MPT and the URC agreed that the annual deficit contributions could be reduced from 2019 by about £500k to £565k with the aim of clearing the deficit by 2025 (earlier than the target date at the previous valuation).

On the basis of this valuation, from 1 January 2019 the employer future service contributions went up from 14.90% to 21.95% of stipend. Active members contribute 7.5% of stipend. This scheme has benefited from good investment performance. The increase in future service contributions is almost entirely due to the extended duration of the current exceptionally low interest rates.

On the solvency basis, the deficit was £73.2 million.

As stated above, the Pensions Regulator has recently written to the trustee to express serious concerns about the basis of this valuation. See 5.2 below.

4.4 URC Final Salary Scheme

An actuarial valuation of the Final Salary Scheme is being carried out by the scheme actuary as at 30 September 2019. Preliminary results will be available early in 2020.

The previous valuation was as at 30 September 2016. This showed a deficit on the technical provisions basis of £5.7 million on assets of £23 million. The deficit had increased substantially since the previous valuation.

After consultation with all the participating employers, it was agreed to make capital contributions of £3.4 million into the scheme in order to keep the overall level of regular contributions the same. From 1 January 2018, employer future service contributions went up from 17.6% to 25.1% but deficit contributions went down from 10.5% to 3.0% so overall there was no change. Active members continue to contribute 7.5% of salary.

On the solvency basis, the deficit in September 2016 was £29.5 million.

5. A summary of the challenges we face

5.1 Just a summary

What follows is a brief and incomplete summary of the issues that need to be addressed in relation to the two URC pensions schemes. This is a complex and evolving situation. Updates and more details will be provided at the forthcoming consultations (see 6.2 below).

5.2 Legal financial and conciliar structures of the URC

The URC does not have anything like a normal corporate structure and it is not hierarchical in the way some of its sister churches are. The URC family consists of a large number of inter-related but separate legal entities. The financial assets of the URC are held in many places. In particular, there are 14 separate trust companies holding assets on behalf of the 13 synods and General Assembly. This disconnection causes real concerns for the Pensions Regulator (see 5.7) but it also creates challenges for the Church.

The URC Trust holds financial assets in trust for General Assembly but really on behalf of the whole URC. The URC Trust assumes responsibility for the payment of the stipends and pensions of all URC ministers and Church Related Community Workers, most of whom are or were in local churches. The URC Trust also pays the salaries and pensions of the current and previous staff at Church House.

The URC Trust can only take on these responsibilities on behalf of the whole URC on the basis that it continues to receive the income to the Ministry and Mission fund. Almost all this income is, legally, voluntary donations from local churches and synods.

The Church could have an interesting debate about which URC body or bodies are legally liable for dealing with the pensions challenges that we face, but that would not be productive. The financial reality is that the URC Trust alone does not have the resources to deal with these issues, any more than it could fund the Ministry and Mission Fund expenditure without the contributions from local churches and synods.

The broader financial reality is that the synod trusts, taken together and excluding manse held in trust, hold more than twice the financial assets of the URC Trust. Those assets held by the synod trusts are growing faster than those held by the URC Trust, mainly because of the net proceeds of sale of redundant properties. See 6.5 below.

“A family problem requires a family solution” was a slogan adopted by the Baptist Union in relation to what was a much bigger financial crisis with its pension scheme. The circumstances of the URC may be very different but the message is the same. As a family, we have the resources to deal with these challenges and the obligation to do so.

5.3 Increasing costs of defined benefit pension schemes

Defined benefit pension schemes have suffered from significant increases in costs over a period of at least 15 years. This has been due to a number of factors including the strengthening of regulation requiring more prudent valuations; the collapse in the value of asset values following the 2008 financial crisis and other financial shocks; and the prolonged extraordinarily low interest rates that have been the consequence of the quantitative easing by many central banks since 2008. The overall effects have been not only to increase deficit recovery payments, required because of higher pension fund deficits, but also to increase the cost of accruing future service benefits.

In 4.3 and 4.4 above, the current level of contributions to the two pension schemes is provided. If there was an actuarial valuation of the Ministers' Pension Scheme today (mid-September), the future service contributions would have to go up by around another 5%. Comparable figures are not available for the Final Salary Scheme, but it is almost inevitable that the URC will face further increases in the level of future service contributions following the current valuation of the Final Salary Scheme and the 2021 valuation of the Ministers' Pension Scheme.

Because of the level of these rising costs, most defined benefit pension schemes have closed. The URC General Assembly has more than once decided to ignore this trend and to maintain what it has perceived to be the 'gold standard' of pensions provision.

In 2012, General Assembly decided to retain the defined benefit scheme for ministers, but agreed to make changes in the rules, including an increase to the normal retirement age and an increase to the members' contribution rate. The final paragraph of the recommendation paper to that General Assembly said: "Whilst we are aware that more radical proposals could have been made to the nature of the scheme, the retirement age or the accrual rate, we believe the above proposals are appropriate at the present time. In particular, we believe that they provide a way to reduce the Church's contribution to the Fund whilst continuing to meet the Church's moral obligation to care for its ministers when they or their dependents are not in a position to care for themselves. We accept that it may be necessary to carry out further reviews in the future." Similar changes were made to the Final Salary Scheme in 2016.

The increasingly prudent approach of the Pensions Regulator is likely to continue to put upward pressure on the cost of defined benefit pension schemes. On the other hand, partly because of recent changes in the law, more flexible alternatives are now available. These factors make it necessary for General Assembly (possibly informed by a prior discussion at Mission Council) to revisit this issue to see if it remains of the same mind. To properly inform this debate when it happens, some exploratory work has been initiated to identify what possible alternatives to the current defined benefit pension schemes might look like.

The questions that have to be asked and answered are not just whether the current arrangements remain affordable but also whether they remain the most suitable way for the URC to provide good pensions to its present and future ministers, Church Related Community Workers, and staff. It seems reasonable to assume that General Assembly will not change its view concerning the moral obligation of the Church to the members of its pension schemes.

It is vitally important, especially for the members of the two schemes, to be clear that: no decision has been taken to change or propose to change either or both schemes; any change can not affect benefits already earned for past service but can only affect the benefits earned in the future following the implementation of the change; and consultation with members will take place before any changes are agreed.

5.4 Dealing with the existing deficits on the two pension funds

It has already been noted that, only recently, the Pensions Regulator has written to the trustee of the Ministers' Pension Fund to express serious disquiet about the basis of the

2018 valuation and about the schedule of contributions that was agreed. A meeting with the Regulator has been fixed for early October. The worst outcome of this would be a requirement to revalue the Ministers' Pension Fund as at the beginning of 2018 on a more prudent basis. This would give rise to a larger deficit which would then require increased deficit contributions. The trustee is of the view that this would be unreasonable and is hoping to avoid it. However, it is possible that some urgent action will be required – for example, regarding the reduction in deficit contributions from January 2019. It is likely that the URC Trust will be able to deal with any urgent actions that are necessary in the short term (and to that end the URC Trust has set aside £1.5 million as additional funding should this be required), but these conversations with the Regulator could have wider and longer-term implications.

Putting to one side these concerns of the Regulator and their implications, the current (mid-September) positions are that the Final Salary Scheme has a more or less zero deficit and the Ministers' Pension Fund may have a deficit of around £3 million. It should be noted, however, that the financial markets are currently extremely volatile. For example, the estimated deficit on the Ministers' Pension Scheme has varied between £1 million and £5 million since the last valuation and even within the last three months.

It may be that, as part of an overall strategy for dealing with all these issues, it might be decided to clear these current deficits more quickly out of capital so that they cease to be a long-term burden on the Ministry and Mission fund.

5.5 Dealing with future financial shocks

In 2009, immediately after the 2008 financial crisis, the deficit on the Ministers' Pension Fund was valued at £22.8 million and the Pensions Regulator agreed a 21-year deficit recovery plan to deal with this. The URC is currently ahead of this plan. The Pensions Regulator has now made it clear that he expects deficits on pension funds to be dealt with much more quickly – typically, in less than five years.

The timing and impact of a future shock in the financial markets is, of course, unpredictable. Actuaries use financial modelling to arrive at what they consider to be a sensible level of provision against such shocks. They put a value on the estimated cost to a pension scheme of an event that has a 1 in 20 chance of occurring in any year. The recently calculated estimates were £20 million for the ministers' pension scheme and £4 million for the final salary scheme. Actual financial shocks may be smaller or larger and may happen a number of times over the future life of the pension schemes. These estimates only provide an order of magnitude of the risks.

It is clear that, if such deficits were to arise, the deficit recovery payments that would be required to clear them over a five year period could not be financed out of the ordinary income of the Ministry and Mission Fund nor out of the income of the URC Trust and the synod trusts. That makes it necessary for the URC family to plan for the possibility of such an event or events, rather than to react afterwards. The URC family needs to decide how best to ensure that such cash could be made available if and when required. This could be by putting such money into one or more designated funds set up for this purpose, or by the provision of some form of guarantee(s) that the funds would be available if needed the trustee and the Regulator, as well as the different parts of the URC family, need to be convinced that adequate arrangements are in place.

The size of the amount of money, or guarantee, required would reduce over time as the pension funds reduced in size and their investments were moved into less risky assets.

Since 2010, a limited guarantee has been provided to the Ministers Pensions Trust by the URC Trust. This is dealt with in 5.7 below.

5.6 Long-term funding requirements

It is clear that there will in future be a much stronger regulatory requirement to strengthen and de-risk the funding of the two URC pension schemes over the long term. This is the issue about which there is currently least clarity but which could actually prove to be the most challenging. It relates to the fact that both the URC pension schemes are maturing in the way described in 1.4 above.

‘Strengthening’ the funding is about gradually, over a number of years, increasing the prudence of the actuarial valuation of the schemes. The effect of this is to require a higher level of assets to be held to provide extra cover for the liabilities of the schemes.

‘De-risking’ the schemes is about reducing or removing the future dependence of the schemes on the URC as employer. Typically, this is achieved by a planned move of the assets of the schemes into more secure, less volatile investments (like government bonds). This would reduce the amount that would need to be held or guaranteed in relation to possible future financial shocks. However, lower risk means lower returns which inevitably means higher costs.

The Pensions Regulator is apparently open to bespoke approaches for employers that do not fit the standard model. The URC definitely does not. The URC might, for example, want to argue that there is no justification for assuming that reliance on the URC as employer needs to be reduced over time, especially given the relative strength of the URC family balance sheet. At the moment, it is not clear what a bespoke solution for the URC that is acceptable to the Regulator might look like. It will require increased funding levels over a number of years, but the amount and the timeframe are not known.

5.7 Legally binding guarantees or equivalent arrangements

The trustees of the two URC pension schemes have up to now judged that the employer covenants with the URC are strong. That assessment has been built on the previous pattern of payments into the pension schemes by local churches and synods via the Ministry and Mission Fund; on the willingness of synods to contribute significant sums to previous deficit funding when required; and on the financial strength of the combined balance sheets of the URC Trust and synod trusts.

As mentioned before, the Pensions Regulator is not comfortable with the dependence of the URC schemes on what are, legally, voluntary donations to the Ministry and Mission Fund. He is also concerned about the partial reliance of the employer covenant on the financial assets of the 13 synod trusts because they are legally independent.

The first of these concerns was partially addressed in 2010 by a legally binding guarantee provided by the URC Trust to the trustee of the Ministers’ Pension Fund. This, essentially, underwrote the expected giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund from which the contributions to the pensions scheme would be paid. However, the wording suggests that the Trust also guarantees the clearing of the deficit on the Fund. The

maximum exposure in this guarantee is £16 million which was the size of the deficit on the Ministers' Pension Fund at that time. This guarantee is subject to the funds being available. The wording of this guarantee will need to be revisited.

The regulatory guidance issued in 2015 now applies to both URC pension schemes. This makes clear that, as far as the Ministers' Pension Fund is concerned, the financial support of the scheme provided by the financial assets of the synods is regarded as 'informal' and should not be taken into account when assessing the long-term strength of the URC employer covenant. If these synod assets are excluded from consideration then the URC employer covenant will be considered to be much less strong, which will lead to a requirement for a more prudent valuation of the pension funds, which will in turn lead to higher costs. The only way to avoid this is to put guarantees, or equivalent arrangements, in place between the synod trusts and the trustee of the ministers' pension scheme, similar to the one provided by the URC Trust.

The underlying concern of the Pensions Regulator, especially with maturing pension schemes, is that the employer will become insolvent or otherwise become unable to provide further financial support to its pension schemes, should that become necessary. The ministers' scheme actuary has suggested that the circumstances of the URC might ideally be dealt with by an overall guarantee over the assets of the URC Trust and the synod trusts, up to the level of the pension fund deficits on the 'solvency' basis. That is currently around £100 million, though the figure would reduce over time as the assets of the pension schemes were de-risked. This might be considered as a very low risk guarantee but one made necessary by the unique legal structure of the URC.

The figure of £100 million may be unrealistic. However, the stronger the guarantees that can be provided by the URC, the lower the costs and the longer the timeframes are likely to be of the long-term funding arrangements dealt with in 5.6.

5.8 Health warning

As stated in 5.1, this section is not a complete description of all the risks and issues being faced by the URC pension schemes and being considered by the IRM project.

6. Integrated Risk Management (IRM) project and consultation process

6.1 Integrated risk management

Integrated risk management (IRM) is an accepted way of assessing all the risks that affect pension schemes in an integrated way, recognising that many of them are inter-related. The aim of this approach is to arrive at a way forward which is acceptable to all parties – the Pensions Regulator, the trustees, and the employer.

Following the 2018 valuation of the Ministers' Pension Fund, an IRM project group was set up consisting of Chris Evans (Convenor), Bridget Micklem, Ian Hardie, John Piper and Lyndon Thomas. This group includes the Convenor of the URC Pensions Executive, the URC Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer and four directors of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust. Others, such as the URC investment committee, are being involved in the work when needed.

The role of the IRM group is to carry out or co-ordinate the work that is necessary to enable the URC as employer and the respective trustees of the two URC pension schemes to plan appropriately for the future.

6.2 Consultations

The IRM group considers it of the utmost importance that there is a genuine consultation about these matters with the wider URC and that this is not restricted to those who might be considered to be finance or pensions 'geeks'. But the unavoidable reality is that the issues are complex and full of uncertainty.

It is also possible, as described in 5.4, that some urgent action may be necessary to meet the immediate concerns of the Pensions Regulator. Any such action will have to be taken account of retrospectively in the consultation process and in its outcomes or recommendations.

The URC Finance Committee has accepted the role of "technical reader" of any output from the IRM project group on behalf of the URC. It is hoped that this will enable others involved in the consultations to accept that any such output from the IRM group is technically sound and consistent, whether or not they agree with any of its conclusions or recommendations about how these issues should be addressed.

Briefing papers were issued in spring 2019 first to the synod treasurers and then to synod officers and synod trust directors and to the URC Trust directors. These were like earlier versions of this paper.

Although, as described above, there are several issues on which the project group is not yet clear, the group now wants to engage in a more interactive process of consultation with the wider URC family.

To this end, a number of consultations have been set up for the end of November and early December 2019. The IRM group hope that synod officers, including synod moderators, and trust directors from each synod as well as URC Trust directors and officers will be well represented at these consultations. These first consultations will be primarily about imparting information and trying to answer people's questions.

There will then be a period in which participants will be encouraged to discuss the issues with their local colleagues and, crucially, to share with the IRM group any ideas about how to deal with these matters.

The IRM group anticipates having a second round of consultations in the spring of 2020. These will be much more in the nature of a conversation beginning to explore possible ways forward. Further meetings will be arranged as required.

6.3 Further work by the IRM project group

At the same time as these consultations are happening, the IRM project group will continue its work. In particular, it will be having further discussions with the Pensions Regulator and with the trustees of the two URC pension schemes. Regular updates will be provided to those involved in the consultation process as information becomes available.

6.4 Decision making and timetable

It is likely that a range of decisions will be required of both the various trust bodies that are affected and of the associated councils of the church. The current thinking of the IRM project group is that it should first seek an agreement in principle between the various trusts and then put the proposals to the church councils – i.e. General Assembly (possibly via a prior discussion at Mission council) and the synods.

The timetable is partly at the mercy of the Pensions Regulator and is very much dependent on how the consultations progress. Ideally, the IRM group would like to achieve agreement in principle during the second half of 2020.

6.5 This is a challenge and not a crisis

There is no getting away from the fact that the URC faces some significant challenges regarding the present and future funding of the two URC pension schemes. It would not be surprising if this paper left members of Mission Council feeling gloomy as well as confused.

The IRM group want to be clear that they consider this to be a challenge rather than a crisis. That is because of the financial resources being held by the URC Trust and by the synod trusts.

At the end of 2017, the combined net assets of the URC Trust and the synod trusts were around £220 million. (This excludes manses held in trust by some synods.) This total had grown by around £70 million over five years. Part of the reason for this was the sale of redundant buildings. The value of church buildings does not normally appear in synod trust balance sheets whereas the proceeds of sale of such buildings does. Of course, this money supports and enables a great deal of really important work for the kingdom in and beyond the URC. Also, some of this money represents restricted funds.

The URC has got smaller numerically but not financially. The URC family should and must bear the cost of and responsibility for the pensions benefits of those who have served it in the past as well as those who serve it now. In that context, it does not seem inappropriate to use some of the proceeds of sale of now redundant church buildings to carry some of this financial burden.

Paper H1

Dissolving the accreditation sub-committee and the Church Related Community Work programme sub-committee and forming the accreditations (CRCW and SCM) sub- committee

Ministries committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	1. Mission Council dissolves the accreditation and the Church Related Community Work Programme sub-committees, with effect from General Assembly 2020. 2. Mission Council agrees to the formation of the accreditations sub-committee, with effect from General Assembly 2020, as a sub-committee of the ministries committee, this sub-committee to take over the majority of the functions of the former accreditation and Church Related Community Work programme sub-committees, any residual tasks to revert to the ministries committee or be allocated by that committee.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Two sub-committees are to be dissolved and one new one, taking most of their functions is to be formed.
Main points	This paper responds to the encouragement of Mission Council to consider reducing the number of committees. It recognises the advantage and learning points in bringing the CRCW and SCM programmes under the same oversight. It therefore proposes the abolition of the two former sub-committees and the formation of a new sub-committee.
Previous relevant documents	None.

Consultation has taken place with...	Accreditation sub-committee CRCW programme sub-committee Steve Summers, CRCW Development Worker Samara Andrews, CRCW Programme Administrator Mary Stacy, SCM Programme Administrator
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Summary of Impact

Financial	A possible slight reduction in committee costs; otherwise none.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

1. In May 2015 Mission Council included group discussion on governance. The minutes record that some felt the “committee structure needs review” and, alongside that, there needs to be “significant streamlining” of committees.
2. As one small response to this, the ministries committee initiated a conversation as to whether the work of two of its sub-committees, Accreditation and Church Related Community Work programme (CRCW PSC) might be brought together in some way.
3. Conversation has been slow, but always moving towards some kind of joining of service to the main committee and the denomination, in particular recognising that two programmes, CRCW and special category ministry (SCM), the latter coming under the oversight of the Accreditation sub-committee, can learn from each other. Joint meetings and conversations between the convenors have supported this.
4. Both sub-committees fully support this change, so the ministries committee proposes to dissolve the two former sub-committees and, simultaneously, to form a new sub-committee, to be known as the accreditations (CRCW and SCM) sub-committee.
5. The remit of the new committee will be:
 - a) the approval and subsequent monitoring of CRCW projects
 - b) the approval and subsequent monitoring of SCM projects
 - c) the consideration and management of certificates of eligibility
 - d) the maintenance of the roll of ministers
 - e) the advocacy of CRCW ministry
 - f) such other matters as may, from time to time, be allocated by the ministries committee.
6. The consideration of Higher Education and other grants will revert to the ministries committee, which will also take responsibility for any other matters not within the specified remit of the new sub-committee.
7. Whilst retaining the distinctive nature of CRCW and SCM ministries, ministries committee believes that the way they are administered could be closer in practice, and more in line with CRCW practice.
8. The current annual pattern of meetings is that each has three. Accreditation meets in London, while CRCW PSC has one meeting in London, one residential

(normally Manchester) and one at a project. It is envisaged that the new committee will follow the pattern of the former CRCW PSC.

9. The current membership of the sub-committees is:

Accreditation	CRCW
Russell Furley-Smith (Convenor) [2021]	Simon Loveitt (Convenor) [2020]
Andrew Prasad (Synod Mod) [2020]	Peter Meek (Synod Mod) [2022]
Susan Durber [2021]	Ann Honey (CRCW) [2022]
Rob Moverley [2022]	Marie Trubic (CRCW-co-opted) [2022]
Bill Gould (Convenor Ass Board) [2024]	Ruth Maxey [2020]
	Leonora Jagessar Visser t'Hoofft [2021]

10. The suggested membership of the new sub-committee is:
Convenor, Convenor of Assessment Board, one CRCW, one SCM postholder, one Synod Moderator and three members, making a total of eight plus ex-officios.
11. Ministries committee is requesting the nominations committee to extend the service of Simon Loveitt (currently CRCW PSC convenor) by one year, so that the two current convenors may serve as co-convenors for the first year. A new convenor-elect will shadow them. It further requests that all current members of the two former sub-committees, who do not conclude their service at General Assembly 2020, serve out their current term of service on the new sub-committee. This leaves the new sub-committee needing one further new member from General Assembly 2020, who should be an SCM post-holder, and with one additional member, apart from convenors, serving for the first year. The Synod Moderators will also nominate a new member as Andrew Prasad concludes his term of service on this sub-committee at General Assembly and Peter Meek will have retired.

Paper H2

Ministers of Word and Sacraments on more than one roll

Ministries committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	1. Mission Council confirms that a minister of Word and Sacraments, apart from the exceptions listed below (in paragraphs five and six) should not remain on the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church if on the roll of another denomination.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	This clarifies the position of ministers of Word and Sacraments with respect to being on the roll of ministers.
Main points	<p>A minister of Word and Sacraments on the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church should not normally be on the roll of ministers of another denomination.</p> <p>However, one exception to this is when there are cultural, historical or financial reasons for maintaining their status as a minister of an overseas denomination.</p> <p>The second exception is that temporary continuance on the roll may be agreed when a minister has moved to another denomination, normally overseas, while that minister is in early ministry in that different context.</p>
Previous relevant documents	Paper M4 Mission Council November 2018.
Consultation has taken place with...	N/A

Summary of impact

Financial	None,
External (e.g. ecumenical)	It could be that conversations will be required with a denomination that takes a different view on this matter.

1. It has been the custom and practice of the United Reformed Church that a minister cannot be on the roll of more than one church. However, following a recent appeal against a removal from the roll of ministers, ministries committee was requested to bring a statement on the matter to Mission Council or General Assembly to clarify when and if ministers of Word and Sacraments may be on more than one roll.
2. In the affirmations that are required at ordination and every induction a minister of Word and Sacraments of the United Reformed Church makes a commitment to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church but, alongside that, a specific commitment to the United Reformed Church, in particular to exercise ministry in accordance with the Statement of Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church.
3. Holding dual standing raises concerns regarding discipline; by accepting ordination and/or induction (or its equivalent) into a new church and accepting their discipline indicates that the minister is allowing this to supersede the previous discipline relationship, therefore compromising a commitment to the discipline of the URC.
4. Therefore, any minister of the United Reformed Church who is received as a minister into another church, and not having resigned from the United Reformed Church roll of ministers, is deemed to have done so.
5. Equally, any minister of another denomination who is received onto the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church but who remains on the roll of another church will be regarded as wishing their place on the United Reformed Church roll to be revoked unless there are cultural, historical or financial reasons for maintaining their status as a minister of an overseas denomination.
6. The only time-limited exception to this is that, in exceptional circumstances, normally, though not exclusively, because of moving from another country to the United Kingdom or vice versa, a minister may temporarily remain on two rolls in order to provide for a return to their former situation if the new one proves unsatisfactory. The status of any in that situation will be kept under review by the accreditation sub-committee (or its successor) and brought to a conclusion in line with this resolution within a maximum of three years.
7. Any requests under circumstances outlined in paragraphs five and-or six should be addressed to the Accreditation sub-committee (or its successor) as part of the sub-committee's responsibility to maintain the roll of ministers. Cases of doubt or uncertainty will be taken by the sub-committee to the ministries committee for resolution there.

Paper H3

Pastoral supervision – update and emerging principles

Ministries committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Discussion, and feedback to committee.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To brief Mission Council members on the emerging principles of a scheme for pastoral supervision for all ministers in the United Reformed Church and to invite feedback.
Main points	A definition of pastoral supervision, seven further working propositions, and some issues to address in implementation.
Previous relevant documents	Past Case Review, learning group report, particularly 24 th recommendation.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod Moderators, training officers, Methodist Church, Baptist Union of GB, Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education.

Summary of Impact

Financial	No impact from this paper but the introduction of a scheme will have considerable financial consequences either at local, synod or Assembly level.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The Methodist Church is already introducing a scheme for their ministers and will expect URC ministers having responsibility for Methodist churches to have some kind of supervision.

Introduction and purpose

1. The ministries committee has established a working group to explore the requirement for ministers of the URC to have regular pastoral supervision and how such a scheme may be introduced. The working group comprises Sam Elliot (Elder and member of the ministries committee), Deborah Baird (Training and Development Officer, East Midlands Synod), Kate Gartside (Retired Minister and Pastoral Supervisor) and Julian Sanders (Minister), supported and advised by the Secretary for Ministries.

2. The group conducted an initial period of high-level consultation during the summer. The intention was to be as open as possible, capturing a wide range of ideas and views without prejudging the outcome, and include internal URC stakeholders, ecumenical partners and specialists in pastoral supervision.
3. The group met in September to review feedback received and discuss the key issues, principles and dilemmas that were emerging. This paper seeks to summarise the feedback and discussion, and sets out a series of propositions we would like to test with the ministries committee, Mission Council and others over the coming months.
4. **NB:** This paper uses 'ministers' to refer to both ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and makes no distinction between the two regarding the type of pastoral supervision each will require.

Themes

Defining pastoral supervision

5. Through our work so far we have been guided by the Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education (APSE) description of what pastoral supervision is and is not. It is "a regular, planned, intentional and bounded space in which a practitioner skilled in supervision (the supervisor) meets with one or more other practitioners (the supervisees) to look together at the supervisees' practice".
6. It is a confidential and trusting relationship, spiritually and theologically rich, psychologically informed, contextually sensitive, based on personal practice, and a process of growth. The full description is attached at appendix X.
7. We were indebted to the Revd Simon Walkling, the Moderator of the National Synod of Wales, for his thoughtful reflection on the "restorative, formative and normative" functions of supervision. Supervision should enable ministers to "offload some of the stress of their work" and look after their health and wellbeing (restorative); to learn and develop through reflecting on their practice and that of others (formative); and to be attentive to accountability and ethical working (normative).
8. Michael Paterson, the Director of the Institute of Pastoral Supervision and Reflective Practice, speaks of pastoral supervision "encouraging a conversation between soul, role and context". We felt this was a helpful and evocative way of describing supervision to those new to the concept.
9. Proposition one:
Pastoral supervision in the URC will draw on these definitions and reflections in defining its own view of 'what pastoral supervision is'. The final proposal will include a clear definition of pastoral supervision as required by the URC.

Expectations and reception

10. A number of responses suggested that ministers may be reluctant or anxious about pastoral supervision and urged us to be mindful of the need to ensure “buy-in” from ministers.
11. Nonetheless, we were encouraged not to be pessimistic. If the Church agrees and there is clarity about what pastoral supervision is and the value it will add, then there will be acceptance.
12. Indeed, a lively discussion on the ministers’ Facebook page suggested this was needed “sooner rather than later”.
13. Proposition two:
There is an appetite across the denomination for pastoral supervision, but a final scheme will still need to be mindful of building trust and buy-in from ministers.

Supervision and accountability

14. We acknowledge that the name “supervision” can have its drawbacks. For those who are not used to the concept of ‘pastoral supervision’ it can imply an equivalence with a professional ‘line management’ relationship.
15. We heard about professions, like social work, where this is an important element of professional accountability. The Methodist system also retains a hierarchical element to its supervision, with e.g. some District Chairs supervising Circuit Superintendents, who in turn supervise Circuit Ministers.
16. At least one response suggested that we should consider introducing this sort of hierarchical accountability to the URC’s pastoral supervision scheme. We felt this went beyond our remit from the ministries committee and did not align with practice in other denominations or in pastoral supervision more generally.
17. Proposition three:
Pastoral supervision in the URC is not intended to replicate a professional management relationship. Whilst issues of practice, development and accountability in relation to the minister’s local church and synod will arise, they are not the main focus.

Group supervision

18. Although we have assumed throughout that pastoral supervision in the URC will be a one-to-one relationship between supervisee Minister and supervisor, we have heard about other models:
Group supervision – groups of two or more are supervised together, with the help of a trained facilitator
Peer supervision – supervisees meet together in a group without a facilitator to explore issues together.
19. Although group-based supervision may be a more efficient way to use supervisors, it has practical drawbacks. Assembling appropriate groups of ministers would not be straightforward. Groups can reinforce existing bad practice or lead to ministers not being open or trusting.

20. That said, these methods are felt to be valuable in their own way and may be particularly appropriate for certain contexts. For now, however, we will continue to develop a scheme based on one-to-one supervision.
21. Proposition four:
Pastoral supervision in the URC will normally be conducted on a one-to-one basis between supervisor and supervisee.

Feedback, Reporting and confidentiality

22. We would envisage supervision to be confidential between supervisor and supervisee, with some specified exceptions relating to safeguarding, legal and serious wellbeing issues.
23. Clearly, however, it is important that synod moderators receive some form of feedback. At a minimum they need to know that pastoral supervision is taking place - we would expect ministers to be meeting a supervisor roughly every six to eight weeks. They also need to be equipped to respond to any concerns or needs arising from the supervision.
24. We feel this would be best done through a process of annual reporting, which would include the minister reflecting on their own training and development needs to be pursued with the local church and the synod.
25. Proposition five:
Pastoral supervision will be confidential between minister and supervisor, with certain specified exceptions. A regular report should be submitted to the synod moderator to ensure both that supervision is taking place, and that any relevant needs that arise can be addressed.

Resourcing

26. The main resource required for a denomination-wide scheme of pastoral supervision is a good supply of appropriate supervisors.
27. How this might be defined is not always clear. The Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education offers an accreditation scheme, but in practice only a small number of trained supervisors apply for and attain this standard.
28. We have considered how important it might be to have supervisors who already understand the work of ministers. While some pre-existing knowledge may be desirable, suitably qualified and well-briefed supervisors should be able to apply their professional skills to any context.
29. Overall, it seems right to prioritise identifying trained and skilled pastoral supervisors, rather than restricting ourselves to what may be a relatively narrow field of those experienced in supervising ministers. In any case, the capacity of supervisors is likely to be a central obstacle.
30. To tackle this, the Church should seek to identify those within the denomination who may be gifted in this area and may be interested to receive training. We are,

however, mindful of the issues of commitment and workload that relate to all areas of church life.

31. Proposition six:
Pastoral supervision in the URC should prioritise using trained professional supervisors from a variety of backgrounds, rather than relying on those already within the Church. The URC should also seek to increase capacity in this area by identifying ministers and lay people who might have the requisite gifts to become supervisors.

Funding

32. Ministers have an allocated budget for training and development (£350 reduced from £700 several years ago). A supervision scheme will ultimately need to be resourced from local churches. A partnership approach between the local church and the denomination may be the way forward.
33. Proposition seven:
Pastoral supervision should be funded jointly by local churches and the denomination.

Interaction with existing appraisal and review

34. We have been asked how a scheme of pastoral supervision would work alongside existing processes such as Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal (MASA).
35. There may be a view that existing appraisal schemes do things that supervision might not, such as reporting to synod and explicitly identifying training and development.
36. The group felt that pastoral supervision can and should accommodate these elements, and that more regular and structured supervision is likely to eliminate the need for periodic self-appraisal.
37. Proposition eight:
Pastoral supervision should become the principal way of ensuring ministers reflect on their practice, feed issues back to synod moderators and identify development needs. It should therefore replace MASA and any similar requirements.

Implementation

38. A detailed plan for implementation of the scheme will need to be developed at the next phase of our work. Some other practical issues not previously mentioned here have already been identified, however. **The group would welcome further ideas, suggestions and views on these and any related issues.**
39. **Training for supervisees** – We will need to identify ways in which pastoral supervision can be introduced to ministers, as well as ways in which they can be supported and trained to make the most of supervision. This could be done through synod training days, at EM2 and, for new ministers, through the Resource Centres for Learning.

40. **Briefing for supervisors** – Supervisors who come from outside the denomination need to be briefed appropriately. This will probably require some bespoke material to be produced, drawing on existing resources, such as the Marks of Ministry.
41. **Contracting** – This does not refer only to a transactional agreement between supervisor and supervisee, but to a covenant that reflects a mutual agreement between the two about the supervisory process and relationship. The group suggests that the denomination should have an agreed model contract for ministers and supervisors that includes the flexibility for agreeing specific goals and ways of working. In practical terms, the group’s current expectation is that ministers will be asked to set up and manage their own supervision, perhaps from a list of suggested supervisors.
42. **Constituency** – There will need to be a clear definition of who will be expected to receive pastoral supervision. Suggestions include those on the list of active ministers, all those “in pastoral charge”, chaplains, Synod Moderators and Ministers in Special Category Ministry posts. Generally retired ministers are not expected to be included, nor are lay preachers. We need to ensure different model of ministry are also considered and included – for example, Southern Synod would expect their Local Church Leaders to receive pastoral supervision.
43. **Making it mandatory** – Currently the group suggests that the requirement to undertake pastoral supervision should be included in Terms of Settlement.
44. **Phased implementation** – More thought is needed on the specific process for introducing pastoral supervision, but the group anticipates the need to phase in the scheme in a structured way. It may be appropriate for newly ordained Ministers to form part of the initial cohort.
45. The Group has already received valuable advice and background from APSE. As these emerging principles are refined further, we intend to discuss with them the practical implications of our proposals - advice and support - especially ‘making supervisors’

Conclusion

46. Mission Council is asked to comment on the conclusions reached so far, and in particular on the propositions advanced and the practical issues identified.
47. Following this discussion, the group intends to again consult synod moderators with a view to refining the emerging principles into specific, detailed proposals in the New Year.

H3 Appendix:

Pastoral supervision is:

- a regular, planned, intentional and bounded space in which a practitioner skilled in supervision (the supervisor) meets with one or more other practitioners (the supervisees) to look together at the supervisees' practice
- a relationship characterised by trust, confidentiality, support and openness that gives the supervisee freedom and safety to explore the issues arising in their work
- spiritually/theologically rich – works within a framework of spiritual/theological understanding in dialogue with the supervisee's world view and work
- psychologically informed – draws on relevant psychological theory and insight to illuminate intra-personal and inter-personal dynamics
- contextually sensitive – pays attention to the particularities of setting, culture and world-view
- praxis based – focuses on a report of work and /or issues that arise in and from the supervisee's pastoral practice
- a way of growing in vocational identity, pastoral competence, self awareness, spiritual/theological reflection, pastoral interpretation, quality of presence, accountability, response to challenge, mutual learning
- attentive to issues of fitness to practice, skill development, management of boundaries, professional identity and the impact of the work upon all concerned parties.

Pastoral supervision is not:

- spiritual accompaniment – for the sole or primary purpose of exploring the spiritual life and development of the supervisee(s). Aspects of this may arise in pastoral supervision but are not the main focus
- counselling – for the purpose of helping the supervisee(s) gain insight into their personal dynamics, or helping the supervisee(s) to resolve or live more positively with their psycho-social limitations. Aspects of this may arise in pastoral supervision and, if necessary, the supervisee(s) may be encouraged to seek counselling support.
- line management – for the purpose of addressing professional practice and development issues in relationship to the supervisee(s)'s performance and accountability (whether paid or voluntary) to her/his employer. Aspects of this may arise in pastoral supervision but are not the main focus

www.pastoralsupervision.org.uk/about-pastoral-supervision/

Paper I1

Healing: hope in action

Mission committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Alan Yates alan.yates@urc.org.uk Bernie Collins bernie.collins@thecrocker.net
Action required	Discussion.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	<p>This paper was produced by the mission committee's Legacies of Slavery (LoS) task group which was formed to consider what the URC should do following the Council for World Mission's (CWM) hearings on and report into the Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery.</p> <p>Mission Committee discussed this paper in September and now offers it to Mission Council for further discussion and feedback to the Legacies of Slavery task group. It is envisaged that following further discussion at mission committee in February and (possibly) Mission Council in March 2020, a final version with resolutions would be brought to General Assembly in July 2020.</p> <p>This would be in line with a recommendation from the Legacies of Slavery task group and with a call from CWM to us arising from the Legacies hearings.</p>
Main points	<p>This paper outlines the background, Biblical framework, objectives and current situation, and then considers three aspects of how the United Reformed Church might respond:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. the value and need for, and how to make, an apology for the evil of the enslavement of black people and its legacies of racism, black deprivation and white privilege2. how to make reparation3. the origin of white privilege, and an approach to identifying, challenging and dismantling white privilege in our Church and society.
Previous relevant documents	Paper I1, Mission Update to Mission Council, November 2018 Paper I1, Mission Update to Mission Council, May 2019.
Consultation has taken place with...	Conversation has taken place with some Trustees of the Coward Trust.

Summary of impact

Financial	The financial impact depends on the result of discussions about reparations and further work on the scope of a white privilege review.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	<p>The Baptist Union Justice Enabler has been consulted, as the Baptist Union made an apology in 2007. Other denominations may be consulted as this work progresses.</p> <p>Our intentional dealing with this will be seen by our partner churches in the Caribbean, Africa and other parts of the world with some form of shared colonial history, as an appropriate and timely response to a serious and relevant issue and as a welcome commitment on our part.</p>

Healing: hope in action

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper has been produced by the Mission Committee's Legacies of Slavery (LoS) task group¹. The group was formed to consider what the URC should do following the Council for World Mission's (CWM) paper looking into the Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery.

1.2 This paper proposes ways in which the United Reformed Church might respond to the three significant aspects of the legacies of slavery identified and presented in a paper to Mission Committee in February 2019:

- Should the URC make an apology for complicity in Transatlantic Slavery?
- What should the URC do about possible reparations for Transatlantic Slavery?
- How might the URC contribute to societal advance on the issue of White Privilege² today?

1.3 The structure of this paper is as follows:

- Context: which gives the background leading to this work
- Biblical framework: which gives several 'indicative' texts providing the Christian context to our deliberation
- Objectives: which sets the goals of our work
- Current situation: which gives a brief understanding of some of the issues already being addressed
- Suggested actions: which summarises the actions suggested in the appendices
- Summary.

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² Privilege can come from any defining feature of a group, such as colour, class, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. Here we focus on privilege simply based on people's colour.

- 1.4 There are seven appendices to this paper:
1. **Apology:** which discusses the value of, and need for, an apology for the evil of enslavement of black peoples and its legacies, and argues that the URC as a denomination should, as a member of the body of Christ located in Britain (a nation that benefitted from the trade in human bodies), apologise for these atrocities and the concomitant legacies of racism, black deprivation and white privilege;
 2. **Reparation:** which argues that reparation for these atrocities is needed at many levels;
 3. **White privilege:** which discusses the origin of and rationale for White privilege, and sets forth an approach to identifying, challenging and dismantling White privilege in our Church today;
 4. The CARICOM Reparations Justice Program ten-point plan;
 5. Relevant URC General Assembly resolutions which support this paper;
 6. An example of a suitable apology; and
 7. A glossary of key terms.

2. Context

- 2.1 In November 2017 CWM³ launched a series of Hearings to identify the Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery. The report of the core team highlighted racism and deprivation as key elements of the legacies. It also cited the continuing concerns with white privilege. The core team provided a wide-ranging set of recommendations which recognised a process of healing starting with apology and resulting in reparation. On pg11 they state: "Reparation is key to bringing peace, healing and restorative justice. Without reparations the inequalities between white and black nations and communities are perpetuated." It has become increasingly evident that the dismantling of white privilege is also key to addressing the ongoing legacies and reparations.
- 2.2 While progress towards equity for black people has been significant during the latter part of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century, the rise of ultra-rightwing parties has brought racism back into sharp focus. 'There is a question as to whether racism has increased or simply become less hidden. In particular, Brexit appears to have made racism more acceptable in some quarters⁴. It has also revealed the underbelly of a fissure in modern British society, which is the lack of any significant reflections on white privilege and the attendant supremacist underpinnings.

3. Biblical framework

- 3.1 The Gospels are replete with texts that could serve to locate our motivation as a Christian community. Here are three indicative texts that offer a solid foundation for our deliberations:
- Matthew 22:36-40 provides us with Christ's two commands: to love God and to love our neighbour.

³ CWM is the successor organisation to the London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, the Commonwealth Missionary Society (1836) and the (English) Presbyterian Board of Missions (1847).

⁴ See article in Institute of Race Relations entitled Post Brexit Racism and dated 7/7/16

- Luke 10:25-37 provides us with one example of a man from a people hated by the Jews (a Samaritan) who shows unqualified love for a stranger and 'enemy'. In this parable the behaviour of the priest and the Levite seems to resonate with the behaviour of some 'decent' people today.
- Luke 19:2-10 gives another example of an 'unlovable' man (Zacchaeus) who was shown love by Jesus ... and who offered to pay restitution over and above what was called for by Jewish law.

3.2 We are left in no doubt that there are no restrictions to who is our neighbour: it is all humankind. There is no justification for racism, white privilege or privilege of any sort. We are also guided as to the need for restitution.

4. Objectives

4.1 The aims of our reparation considerations are to define how we are to play our part in:

- Seeking healing for the atrocities of the past, which starts with recognition of wrongs, an apology, repentance, and gratitude for black peoples worldwide
- Seeking healing for the legacies of those atrocities for both the victims and perpetrators
- Striving to end racism and discrimination
- For LoS countries and communities:
 - Reducing deprivation
 - Releasing communities from the burden of government debt
 - Restoring Black people's confidence in their unqualified worth.

5. Current situation

5.1 Since our involvement in the LoS Hearings some work has been going on to identify the role our denomination played in the enslavement of black peoples. The URC History Society prepared a summary of our relevant history which is summarised as follows:

5.1.1 Churches of Christ did not arrive in the United Kingdom until 1836, and so they had no [direct] involvement in slavery.

5.1.2 It was not until 1844 that the small number of Presbyterians in England were able to organise themselves into the Presbyterian Church in England. Hence, as a denomination the Presbyterians were not [directly] involved in slavery.

5.1.3 The Congregational Union of England and Wales was not formed until 1831, and so as a denominational body had no [direct] involvement in slavery, but many individuals did.

5.2 The paper also highlighted a number of prominent Congregationalists involved in slavery:

5.2.1 William Alers Hankey, at one stage the treasurer of the London Missionary Society, was certainly an apologist for the status quo and was a Congregationalist; and so were the Moulton Barretts (Elizabeth Barrett Browning's family). The Countess of Huntingdon inherited an estate from Whitefield in 1770, which was run using slaves. There is, though, some

debate about the extent to which the Countess could be regarded as a Congregationalist.

- 5.2.2 William Coward, a young London merchant, acquired a plantation in Jamaica around 1676. Coward's second involvement in the slave trade, indeed his main business on his return to England, was as the owner of several ships trading with Jamaica. His ships took dry goods to Madeira and the Caribbean, and returned with sugar and ginger, the produce of the plantations, including his own. In addition, Coward's biggest ship, the Gold Frigate, was hired on three occasions to those who were involved in carrying slaves. Coward emerged after 1660 as a Dissenter and in due course used his resources to fund lectures in the City to defend his High Calvinist beliefs. He built a house and a chapel and supported ministry in Walthamstow and registered his country house in Sussex for dissenting worship. He also supported men studying for the Dissenting ministry and was a familiar of Doddridge. Coward left £150,000, a considerable sum in the currency of those days, to support students for the Dissenting ministry, and the Coward Trust continues to steward money from that legacy. We understand that the trustees have broadened the scope of the trust to include ministers and ordinands from Guyana and Jamaica. We are encouraged by this direction of travel.
- 5.3 Sir Culling Smith served as a treasurer of the London Missionary Society after Hankey. He owned a plantation in St Kitts and received the equivalent of £630,000 in 1834 when slave ownership was made illegal in the UK. Ironically, as an MP, he piloted antislavery legislation in the 1830s. This, in our view, would suggest that many influential figures were involved in the trade.
- 5.4 Whilst the URC History Society has used their best endeavours to establish our relevant history, it does not preclude the existence of other, as yet unknown, Dissenters having significant involvement in slave trading or gifts of money/assets whose source is linked to slavery. More intentional research will need to be done in this regard.

6. Suggested actions

- 6.1 The list of suggested actions is given below in summary. The background to these actions is given in the relevant appendix.

6.2 Apology

- Prepare an apology and proposals for its delivery and communication
- Deliver and publish the apology

6.3 Reparation

- For the URC
 - Strengthen our relationships with our CWM partner churches in the Caribbean, and with the UK Districts of the European Presbyteries of our two Ghanaian partner churches
 - Develop and deliver an education programme, to include topics such as white privilege, racism, being a multicultural church with an intercultural

- habit, black self-image, white fragility and guilt, repentance and forgiveness
- Define benchmarks and 'Marks of Equality' as a significant contributor to the culture change needed.
- For the UK, through some form of campaigning, encourage the government to:
 - contribute to the implementation of the CARICOM ten-point reparation plan
 - release LoS countries and communities from debt owed to the UK
 - increase aid for LoS countries and communities
 - support positive black self-image programmes
 - help to reduce the influence of white privilege in the UK by sharing the learnings from our review (outlined in paragraph 6.4).
- For LoS countries and communities, work with our partner denominations to achieve:
 - improved literacy and health care
 - reduction in deprivation
 - positive black self-image programmes.

6.4 White privilege

- A concrete commitment to enabling and resourcing conversations across the whole URC to raise awareness and understanding about white privilege, and to ensure that all voices are truly listened to
- Design and conduct a white privilege review, with the support of the equalities committee, to examine how white privilege influences the policies, processes and behaviours in our denomination, and begin to dismantle it
- Consider practical ways to help us overcome white fragility (white resistance to honest discussion of white complicity) in the URC.

7. Summary

The LoS task group is unanimous in urging the URC to make an apology for the enslavement of black peoples and particularly for the legacies that followed. The task group is also very clear that this needs to be done together with some programme of reparation and education. Additionally, there is a need to look carefully, with the equalities committee, at how white privilege operates in the URC, and to initiate actions to eliminate it.

Appendix one: apology

1. Introduction

- 1.1 That the Transatlantic Slave Trade happened is an accepted fact. That it dehumanised so many is also a very real blot on the history of the world with some peoples becoming stronger whilst many others were weakened as their voices, their livelihoods and their lives were stolen. The whole African continent lost many of those in the prime of their lives, effectively contributing to the region's underdevelopment and depopulation. The resulting inequalities between black and white peoples have been multiplied many times over in the intervening years leading to the position we face today. That much of the world is a far easier and more fruitful place for white people is bound up with the issue of white privilege which this report attempts to highlight. It is hard enough for us to think again of such times in the human story, perhaps harder still to face the question of what our response before God and God's people should be – and what result our response might hope to bring. But, however difficult, how long can we close our eyes to the need for action to redress these inequalities born from the evil of Transatlantic Slavery?

2. Apology is only the start

- 2.1 To not apologise for something that we know to be so wrong raises the question of whether we approve or disapprove of the action. Making an apology is making plain that we believe what happened was wrong, and that we are not willing to ignore the legacies of that wrong. But words are only a start; they must be accompanied by actions that prove the value of our words – that we consider the wrongs of the past need to be righted. Apologising does not excuse the acts committed in the past; it does attempt to draw a line under them and enable change to happen.

3. Why should we apologise?

3.1 Because wrong has been done

- 3.1.1 As individuals we have not played an active part in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We were not there. Yet as a body, the United Reformed Church, and our antecedents, have been complicit in profiting from the ongoing legacies of the trade and the inequalities it wrought. Whilst some may consider that an apology from us today for the deeds of others long gone is not helpful, can we ignore the voices of our partner churches in the Caribbean, Africa and those of the diaspora in the UK who see such a corporate apology as being a vital step towards reconciling and deepening relationships?

3.2 Because wrong needs naming

- 3.2.1 Appendix five to this report shows a list of some of the many previous reports accepted by the United Reformed Church meeting in General Assembly that decry injustice in the world and affirm our theological belief that all are equal in God's sight. This report asks the question whether we, as a body, can hold the view that things are wrong, without going further and issuing an apology for the fact that that they happened.

3.3 Because the Body of Christ is weakened

- 3.3.1 In 2006 the then Archbishop Rowan Williams urged the Church of England to acknowledge its corporate and ancestral guilt in these words:
“The Body of Christ is not just a body that exists at any one time; it exists across history and we therefore share the shame and the sinfulness of our predecessors, and part of what we can do, with them and for them in the Body of Christ, is prayerful acknowledgment of the failure that is part of us, not just some distant “them””
- 3.3.2 This report urges the United Reformed Church to take similar stock of our position within the world-wide Church seeking to address the wrongs that have divided us historically, and which still divide today. Before us is a Kairos moment to declare publicly and formally that we not only regret the historic action of others, but also that today we affirm the unity and equality we share before God.

3.4 Because of the power of apology

- 3.4.1 In 2007 the Baptist Union Council UK⁵ passed an historic resolution apologising for their part in the Transatlantic Slave Trade because they knew that any negative issues raised were worth enduring in order for the positive effect on those hearing the apology.
- 3.4.2 Another historic example of the power of apology arose in 1970 when the late Willy Brandt, then Chancellor of Germany, visited Auschwitz, fell to his knees and begged for forgiveness and apologised on behalf of his nation. This apology is all the more powerful in that Brandt had himself been imprisoned by the Nazis. He knew that he was not personally liable in any way, and yet he realised that, corporately, he shared in the guilt of his nation. This, and other such acts and statements, have allowed us all to see that Germany no longer stands by the actions of her past.
- 3.4.3 Will an apology put out the fire of hatred, racism and oppression? Perhaps not, but a formal acknowledgement of significant erroneous actions has a power of its own that will be felt for more years than we can measure.

4. Who should we apologise to?

4.1 To the people of Africa and the Caribbean

- 4.1.1 When we say that we are truly sorry for the wrongs done to others, and seek to repair the damage done, we begin to right the wrongs of the past.

⁵ See article in the Baptist Times on 22/10/2017. https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/506587/The_Apology_Ten.aspx

It is important to apologise to the peoples of Africa for the murder and exploitation suffered as a result of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, for the dismantling and displacement of their communities. It is equally important to apologise to the people of the Caribbean, to recognise the direct link and impact as people descended from the enslaved, the ancestors of those taken across the middle passage.

4.2 To those descended from these communities

4.2.1 The United Reformed Church today is blessed to have members from so many cultures, including people who are descended from those formerly enslaved. This is why it is vital to understand that we are not apologising as individuals, but corporately, for the acts of those who have gone before. But we also speak a louder welcome and foster a stronger and more authentic unity when we proclaim that there is no place amongst us for racism of any kind, at any period of time.

5. Who should issue the apology?

5.1 We hope that the General Assembly will request their Moderator(s) to issue an apology on behalf of the whole of the United Reformed Church, thus confirming the corporate nature and ownership of the apology. By proclaiming our sorrow for past wrongs, we strengthen our claim to seek justice in the here and now.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Apology and reparation are inextricably linked. Apology without reparation is meaningless. An apology carries the potential to repair harm, mend relationships, offer balm for wounds, and heal broken hearts. But for the potential to be realized, we must 'be in it for it to happen'. Repair and mending must take some concrete form of restoration/reparation. It is what constitutes justice. Taking responsibility through restitution, or a promise to act, is one way of recognising the evil of what happened and ensuring that such will not be repeated.

6.2 If and when the Church agrees that an apology is needed, the communications team should be asked to help develop suitable wording to be considered at Mission Council or General Assembly. An example of a suitable apology is given in appendix six.

Appendix two: Reparation

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Should the URC issue an apology we will need to make some form of reparation. This needs to be done in the context of striving to make a contribution to the overall reparation for these evil acts and their outcomes. We note that in 1834 slave owners were compensated for their 'loss of property' when slavery was made illegal in Britain. The bill for slave owner compensation, £20m, was about 40% of annual UK government expenditure (at a time when this expenditure was a tiny fraction of what it is today). The government took out a loan to fund these payments. It took until 2015 to repay this loan; over 180 years. Yet none of the enslaved peoples received any compensation whatsoever.

2. Possible actions

- 2.1 Our understanding of reparation for the enslavement of Africans has been guided by the ten-point reparation plan produced by the CARICOM⁶ Reparations Justice Program. A summary of the ten-point plan is given in appendix four.
- 2.2 There are a wide range of actions that the URC could undertake. These actions are considered separately for the URC, for the UK and for the LoS countries and communities.

2.2.1 For the URC

- **Relationships with CWM Churches.** Strengthening our relationships with our CWM partner churches in the Caribbean, and with the UK Districts of the European Presbyteries of our two Ghanaian partner churches, could enable us to develop further as a multicultural church and to play our part in enhancing black self-image.
- **Education.** Given that the legacies of slavery are not well understood, especially in terms of our life together today, an education programme will be needed. An education programme for the URC could include topics such as white privilege, racism, being a multicultural church with an intercultural habit, black self-image, white fragility and guilt, repentance and forgiveness.
- **Define benchmarks and 'Marks of Equality'.** Recent work by our ministries and education and learning committees has produced a document called Marks of Ministry. This has shown positive signs of becoming a pervasive definition of ministry that will enable a cohesive and comprehensive understanding of ministry to inform all aspects of our life as a denomination. Working with the equalities committee, a similar document defining equity and equality within the URC could have a similar positive and pervasive effect. Eliminating discrimination, particularly that which is unintentional and unintended, will take time and needs collective attention

⁶ CARICOM is an abbreviation of Caribbean Community, and is an organisation of fifteen Caribbean nations and dependencies having the primary objectives to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members, and to coordinate foreign policy.

and effort. A document such as Marks of Equality could be a significant contributor to the culture change needed.

- **The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.** At this stage we do not know which URC congregations have benefitted from the Connexion, although it is known that some congregations of the Connexion did become Congregational. Because of the limited value that we think might come from such an investigation, no action is recommended in the short term.

2.2.2 For the UK

There are several objectives that could be sought, probably through some form of campaigning. We could, for instance, encourage the UK government to:

- contribute to the implementation of the CARICOM ten-point reparation plan. For example, favourable technology transfer
- release LoS countries and communities from debt owed to the UK
- increase aid for LoS countries and communities
- support positive black self-image programmes
- help to reduce the influence of white privilege in the UK by sharing the learnings from our review.

2.2.3 For LoS countries and communities

Work with our partner denominations to achieve:

- improved literacy and health care
- reduction in deprivation
- positive black self-image programmes.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Should the URC make a formal apology for the denomination's involvement in Transatlantic Slave Trade and its legacies then it is vital to make some form of reparation. It is only by making reparations that the world will know we are sincere about our apology. The apology will be most effective if some of the reparations can be announced at the same time.

Appendix three: white privilege

1. Introduction

- 1.1 One of the most persistent and pernicious legacies of Transatlantic Slavery has been the invention of 'whiteness' and the privilege associated with whiteness. In the time of slavery whiteness emerged as a crucial identifier of who must not, and who might, be captured, enslaved and trafficked across the Atlantic by European slavers. Then, in the New World, whiteness (or not) also served as the basis of deciding which babies should be welcomed as free human beings, and which could be taken to be legally-owned property from the very day of their birth. Nearly two centuries after the formal abolition of slavery in British Caribbean colonies and Mauritius in the 1830s, this crude, arbitrary and utterly illogical measure of a person's worth still has a profound effect on how our society views individuals and communities and still shapes people's whole experience of life in the UK and many other societies. How did that come about? Why has whiteness persisted as a social force so long after slavery? How does it shape and control the experience of black people in the UK today? What sustains it and protects it against all rationality in our world now? What can we do to address this legacy of slavery? Let us investigate.

2. The invention of Whiteness in the time of slavery

- 2.1 If you were a 17th or 18th Century European whose livelihood depended on the enslaved servitude of people captured from Africa and their enslaved offspring, but you wanted to be clear that you yourself could never become a slave ("*Britons never, never, never, shall be slaves!*"), then the noticeable difference in skin pigmentation between most Europeans and most Africans must have seemed an obvious, practical marker. So, 'whiteness', as a crucial category defining who could be enslaved and who couldn't, was invented. To it were added a host of other real or imagined traits to help explain 'white superiority' as if it were an objective fact and to argue for the social benefits of enforced servitude for those with darker skins, even whilst enslavement was deemed unthinkable for a 'white' person. Educated white males decided that properly-educated white males were obviously more civilised, more intelligent, more reliable, more gifted in leadership, more morally wise, more positively human than any other people. They developed a careful science, which they said was objective, and which, at least to their own satisfaction, proved their self-serving assertions to be nothing but 'the truth'. And they also set about interpreting their received Scriptures in a way that reassured them that God himself had created and ordained these distinctions, even though there is absolutely no basis for a colour-coded distinction between who might and who might not be enslaved in the Hebrew or Christian Bible⁷.

⁷The 'best' Scriptural proof they could muster was the oft-repeated but deeply flawed idea that 'the Curse of Ham' somehow referred to Black Africans. See Goldenberg, David M (2003) *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* Princeton NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press

3. Whiteness after slavery

- 3.1 When the institution of black slavery was ended in the British Empire in the 1830s you might have thought that the importance of presumed racial distinctions would swiftly fade away. But that is not how history and the persistence of power work. Once an idea that helps the powerful to maintain their power has become entrenched in the values and norms of a human society, the powerful will endlessly work to keep that idea operating from generation to generation as an idea so obvious that no-one, not even the oppressed themselves, would think to challenge it.
- 3.2 Thus, British colonial attitudes, bolstered by supportive legislation and endless informal reinforcement of societal norms, kept the idea of white superiority as an accepted 'objective fact' alive and active into and across much of the twentieth century. Indeed, in the period before the Second World War it was widely accepted in white Western society that it was both inevitable and necessary that all of sub-Saharan Africa should have colonial administrations run by one or other of the European powers – black people 'needed' white supervision for their own good. When, in the 1950s and 60s 'the winds of change' began to blow and African independence started to happen, British schools would tell of the new independence of former colonies, the development of educated 'native' elites and the rise of the British Commonwealth, but in a way that never questioned white superiority; black people were being 'improved' by learning to be more like white people. The presumption of white supremacy may have had to accommodate a changing world, but it was not going away.

4. The emergence of 'post-racial' whiteness

- 4.1 But even when the old certainties seemed, at last, to be crumbling, when the Civil Rights Movement challenged 'Jim Crow' discrimination in the Southern States of the USA and resistance within and beyond South Africa made *apartheid* look increasingly unacceptable and thoroughly unjust, inherited ideas of white supremacy simply found better-hidden channels to keep on flowing. Old ways of thinking still worked deep within the minds of people who took themselves to be 'enlightened'.
- 4.2 The classic study by Ruth Frankenberg of racial attitudes amongst educated white women in the USA (chiefly California) in the late 20th Century⁸ explores how this works. Most of the women she interviewed would strongly resist the old claims of white superiority. They accepted that people were people, that skin colour was not a real issue. Often, they would claim that they "did not see colour". On the surface, that sounded much fairer, as if the old racisms necessitated by slave power had at last died out. But Frankenberg identified three problems. Firstly, she observed that, when they found themselves in a corner, these white women would often revert right back to ways of thinking that implicitly relied on the idea of white superiority; notably when they had to confront a personal issue such as one of their own children dating a 'black' person, suddenly they saw colour. Suddenly, family whiteness had to be defended at all costs, even as

⁸ Frankenberg, Ruth (1993) *White women, race matters - the social construction of whiteness* London: Routledge

'racism' was loudly denied. Secondly, many of her interviewees had a very particular attitude to culture. They accepted their own culture ('white culture', though they did not name it as such) as at once completely normal, the neutral 'norm' against which all other cultures should be judged – yet they found their own culture to be so utterly bland that it was deeply boring. Non-white 'ethnic' cultures, by contrast, were felt to be exotic and exciting and 'other'. Again, buried from sight, they were working with ideas that originated in acceptance of a persisting, right, normal, unquestionable whiteness. Thirdly, and most importantly, Frankenberg identified the deep danger of a presumed 'post-racial' approach that says it 'does not see colour' – 'colour'-blindness is power-blindness. It allows white privilege to keep its privileges by pretending that the remaining power imbalances generated between the declared 'white' and the declared 'black' do not exist and so any difficulties faced by black people in our new post-racial society must be of their own making. This attitude allows white people to tell black people that when it comes to slavery, its legacies and contemporary racism, they (the black people) simply need to 'get over it'. 'Racial' inequalities thus persist unchallenged and, in this way, can be blamed on the very victims of those inequalities.

5. White fragility and its effects

- 5.1 The years since Frankenberg's study have not significantly altered the way 'race' operates for many, possibly most, white people in the USA and in the UK. Indeed, the successful campaigns for a Trump presidency in the United States and for 'leave' in the UK Brexit Referendum all too often played, sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly, on white fears of 'the other'. White privilege and white-norming remain, unnamed and unacknowledged, as foundational presumptions for many 'white' people in both nations.
- 5.2 However, there is often a deep resistance to openly addressing these issues. There's a rush to denial and a rapidly-deployed sense of offence ("I'm not a racist!") if anyone attempts to start up honest debate on white complicity in the persistence of racial injustice. In recent years the US scholar Robin Diangelo has made a particular study of how this white resistance to honest discussion of white complicity works. She calls it 'white fragility'⁹.
- 5.3 Diangelo argues, from long experience in the USA, that in our new 'post-racial' societies in the West the white consensus has come to view and define 'racism' in a very narrow and specific way. The implicit definition shared by most White people sees racism as conscious and deliberate bad behaviour by an individual – that's what would justify calling you a racist. As a result, any attempt to discuss race issues runs headlong into a personal defensiveness – "but I'm not a racist!" – which prevents all constructive conversation about the lingering effects of white privilege and white 'norming' and structural racism and its historical roots in slavery and how, unintentionally, even I might be a part of sustaining this entrenched societal injustice.
- 5.4 This quickly-offered personal affront that you could possibly want to talk to me about racism she calls 'white fragility'. She notes how this defensive fragility has a

⁹ Diangelo, Robin (2018) *White fragility, why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism* Boston: Beacon Press

very strong and powerful effect. It shuts down all conversation about White privilege. Indeed, it does this so effectively that she calls it ‘weaponised defensiveness’ or ‘weaponised hurt feelings’¹⁰. And in the way which any sort of relentless personal defensiveness works, black people have often learned that there is little point in telling white colleagues about the ways they have been hurt or slighted or mindlessly insulted because they will only run straight into this white defensiveness and denial and invite further pain for themselves. So, white fragility is practically powerful in reinforcing the *status quo* of unaddressed racism and allowing white privilege to roll on and on.

6. Black experience in the UK today

- 6.1 Lest we imagine that persisting ideas of white privilege hidden deep within the minds of the UK white population is but a trivial issue, let us take a moment to consider how British society operates for black people today.
- 6.2 The statistical litany of black disadvantage in our society is laid out in meticulous detail on a special UK government Ethnicity website¹¹. It details the statistical trace of discrimination in just about every imaginable area of life: crime, justice and the law, culture and community, education skills and training, health, housing, work, pay and benefits, workforce and business. Here are but two quick examples from this mountain of data:
- Stop and search: “Black people were nine and a half times as likely to be stopped and searched [by the police] as white people in 2017/18”¹²
 - Household income: “the black ethnic group had the largest percentage of households in the lowest two income quintiles (at 55%), while the white British and other white ethnic groups had the smallest percentages (at 38%)”
- 6.3 And what sustains this pervasive inequality in a society that claims to seek fairness for all its citizens? It can only be the outworking of that shared bias operated relentlessly by the white majority, even though it remains largely hidden from everyone’s self-inspection. This is the active legacy of ‘whiteness’.
- 6.4 Inevitably, such pervasive and persistent injustice shapes the life-experience and the self-understanding of black people trying to survive and seeking to flourish in UK society. No wonder that black children often recall being told by parents, aunts and uncles that if they want to get anywhere in this society they have to be twice as good in order to be equal. The playing field is not level. So, again, it is little wonder that some black youngsters rebel against a system which requires them to input more than their white counterparts in order to receive less; a system which highlights their involvement in antisocial activities such as criminality and knife crime, without seeking to address the underlying causes – poverty and inequality, which leave many black young people feeling dispossessed and lacking hope. Even within the life of the URC, an organisation committed to being a multicultural church with an intercultural habit, whiteness affects black

¹⁰ view Robin Diangelo talking about these issues:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzLT54QjclA> (accessed 7/6/19)

¹¹ UK Gov Ethnicity facts and figures website: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/> (accessed 11/6/19)

¹² And all the indications are that this disparity will have got significantly worse in 2019 with the much-extended use of stop and search across London as a police tactic deployed in response to growing concerns about knife crime

experience in a thousand and one ways. For example, when a black colleague contributes at a committee it can sometimes feel as if the meeting is just hearing them out before continuing with its real business; when a black ministry student visits a new church they can be met with strange assumptions that seem to imply that all black people must be from the same place; when a black theological college lecturer stands up before a class they seem to have to justify why they are there and teaching, in a way that is not true of white colleagues.

7. What do we do now?

7.1 So, what do we do to help eradicate the lingering, debilitating legacies of slavery within our society? The four key sets of possible actions for the URC are as follows:

7.1.1 Engagement and education. Surely, we have to find a way to talk.

We have to start a conversation where each of us and all of us learn to acknowledge openly how history and power work in our society and work against the Kingdom of God. We need to look closely at the issues unearthed by Frankenberg and the silencing identified by Diangelo. We need to make sure that black voices are truly listened to by white people and their insights afforded full and honest attention. Note that there are many resources already available to help this process.¹³

7.1.2 White privilege review. The concept of whiteness and white privilege appears to be not well understood. It exists both at a conscious and at a sub-conscious level. At a superficial level, there appears little evidence that white privilege is exercised overtly in the URC. However, the level of black participation in leadership roles in the URC suggests that white privilege could be operating. Therefore, it would make sense to conduct a white privilege review, with the support of the equalities committee, to examine how white privilege influences the policies, processes and behaviours in our denomination. This will necessitate some intentional and honest conversations. A key outcome expected is not just to identify white privilege but also to develop a strategy to eliminate it.¹⁴

7.1.3 Overcoming white fragility. We need to work out how we might overcome white fragility in church and in society.

7.1.4 Dismantling white privilege. Some actions and policies to address white privilege already exist (although not named as such). The equalities and nominations committees are already tasked with ensuring all in the URC are treated fairly. A white privilege review should highlight where existing policies, processes and culture need changing. While policies and procedures can be quick to change, culture won't be: we may need considerable stamina to make some changes.

8. Conclusion

8.1 If, as we have argued, this debilitating legacy of slavery, this whiteness thing, needs dismantling and it can only be done by enabling a much-resisted conversation, this must be an issue that affects UK society as a whole. So, where

¹³ See the range of materials available from the UCC. <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>

¹⁴ Further work is needed to define the scope of a White privilege review and precisely how we would conduct it.

does the URC fit into this? We are but a tiny fragment of UK society. Yet, in practice, the society-wide conversation will only happen through lots and lots of much smaller conversations within more and more of the diverse segments of our society. And some smaller groupings are going to have to take a lead. Might it be part of our commitment to Kingdom values and our sense of the prophetic calling of the people of God that we in the URC should seek ways to start honest conversations about the persisting effects of white privilege and white norming both within our churches and in interaction with the communities in which we are set? Like the people in Paul's infant church in Corinth we truly love to proclaim our one-ness in Christ, but, like them, we still have so much work to do to make that one-ness an honest, practical, sustaining reality. Addressing this lingering and deeply corrosive legacy of slavery and starting real conversations about white privilege now is surely a vital part of trying to follow Jesus in the 21st century. Together, can we figure out how we might reconstruct our mindset so that, going forward, the only persisting legacies of slavery will be those which enable justice, reinforce freedom and build co-operation and hope for all – a remembering that empowers us all for life. When can we start that conversation?

8.2 As Paul wrote to those Corinthian Christians:

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth.

1 Corinthians 13.4-6 NRSV

Appendix four: Caricom reparations plan

CARICOM Reparations Justice Program ten point action plan

1. **Full formal apology:** The healing process requires the offer of a sincere formal apology by the governments of Europe.
2. **Reparation:** A program to resettle those persons who wish to return. A resettlement program should address such matters as citizenship and community re-integration.
3. **Indigenous peoples development program:** A development plan is required to rehabilitate the indigenous community who remain traumatized, landless, and are the most marginalized social group within the region.
4. **Cultural institutions:** The establishment of institutions, such as museums and research centres, similar to those in Europe that prepare their citizens for an understanding of these Crimes against Humanity (CAH); giving Caribbean schoolteachers and researchers the same opportunity.
5. **Public health crisis:** One tragic human legacy of slavery and colonisation is that the Caribbean has the highest incidence in the world of chronic diseases in the forms of hypertension and type two diabetes. The governments of Europe need to take responsibility for this.
6. **Illiteracy eradication:** Some 70 percent of black people in British colonies were functionally illiterate in the 1960s. Caribbean governments allocate more than 70 percent of public expenditure to health and education in an effort to uproot the legacies of slavery and colonization. European governments have a responsibility to participate in this effort.
7. **African knowledge program:** The forced separation of Africans from their homeland has resulted in cultural and social alienation from identity and existential belonging. Projects (such as school exchanges and culture tours, community artistic and performance programs, entrepreneurial and religious engagements, as well as political interaction) are needed to build knowledge networks that are necessary for community rehabilitation.
8. **Psychological rehabilitation:** The history of enslavement has inflicted massive psychological trauma upon African descendant populations. Only a reparatory justice approach to truth and educational exposure can begin the process of healing and repair.
9. **Technology transfer:** The Caribbean was denied participation in Europe's industrialization process and was confined to the role of producer and exporter of raw materials. This meant that the Caribbean entered its nation building phase technologically and scientifically ill-equipped. Technology transfer and science sharing is essential for development

- 10 **Debt cancellation:** Caribbean governments that emerged from slavery and colonialism have inherited the massive crisis of community poverty and institutional unpreparedness for development. This has resulted in states accumulating unsustainable levels of public debt that now constitute their fiscal entrapment. Support for the payment of domestic debt and cancellation of international debt are necessary reparatory actions.

Appendix five: relevant General Assembly resolutions

1978

Resolution four (Church and society Department)

The Assembly endorses the **Affirmation in the British Council of Churches Statement on Racism** and urges all members to make a public stand against racism in all its forms and in support of the reconciliation which is so integral a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1980

Resolution one (Church and society department)

The Assembly urges all churches to study the question of racism, both locally and nationally, using the publications of the British Council of Churches' Community and Race Relations Unit, and commends to all Churches the CRRU Project Fund as a practical way of contributing to the creation of a truly multi-racial society in Britain.

1987

Resolution four (Church and society department)

The Assembly adopts the **Declaration on Racism** and commends it for study and action and as a future point of reference throughout the Church.

The declaration on Racism:

<i>Creed</i>	The United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image, free and equal in his sight.
<i>Definition</i>	Racism results where prejudiced attitudes of superiority over others are combined with the power to shape society.
<i>History</i>	Western civilisation is, and has long been, seriously flawed by racism.
<i>Acknowledgment</i>	British society nurtures racism through assumptions, stereotypes and organisational barriers which deny black people a just share of power and decision-making.
<i>Confession</i>	The Church displays racism by failing to adapt so that Black people can share fully in its life, its outreach and its decision-making.
<i>Affirmation</i>	There is cause for celebration in church and society when Black and White people learn to cooperate, share power and make decisions together and where new forms of community life are thus discovered.
<i>Commitment</i>	The United Reformed Church commits itself to challenge and equip all its people to resist racism within themselves, within the church and within society as a whole and to train people and devote resources to this task.
<i>Pledge</i>	The United Reformed Church pledges itself, as it shares in action against racism, to monitor and review at regular intervals what progress is being made in church and society.

1990

Resolution seven (ministries department)

The Assembly adopts the statement **A Declaration of Equal Opportunities** policy (in relation to ministers).

Paragraph four: The Church is aware of possible barriers for example to women and to Black people within the structures of the Church in ministry and other posts; this has to do with expectations, position, role and status.

Paragraph five: The Church will therefore establish appropriate methods of monitoring the appointment, call and position of women and black people in the ministry and of considering appropriate action where necessary.

2004

Mission Council resolution on the British National Party (BNP)

Mission Council at its January 2004 meeting declared that:

‘membership or any form of support for organizations such as the BNP is incompatible with Christian discipleship...’

Resolution 35 Anniversary of the abolition of the British Slave Trade

In commemorating the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in British territories General Assembly adopts the following statement of regret and commitment and calls upon all members of the United Reformed Church to do the same:

- We recognise the inhuman treatment of Africans transported across the Atlantic as slaves and forced to work in degrading conditions
- We are sorry for the legacies of that oppression which still distorts our relations with one another
- We rejoice in the courage of those, black and white, who challenged the values of their day that allowed the slave trade to happen, and we pledge ourselves to recognise the dignity of all God’s people and to build our society on that principle.
- We commit ourselves to the continuing struggle for justice for all the oppressed, including the many who are held in bondage today.

Resolution 31:

General Assembly:

- a) reaffirms its longstanding commitment to engage with global and intercultural themes (including justice, peace, partnerships, mutuality in giving and receiving, solidarity and discipleship) and its desire to make this engagement integral to the whole life of the United Reformed Church;
- b) encourages synods in their mission and ministry to recommit to give appropriate time for, and attention and intention to, the sharing and development of these themes;
- c) directs Mission Council to reflect and report to Assembly 2020 on how the Church lives out this global and intercultural commitment.

Appendix six: an example of a suitable apology

Commitment statement from the United Reformed Church

We, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, are mindful of our own current history, that of our antecedent bodies, the scriptural and theological groundings of our Basis of Union, and of our many declarations and resolutions over the years related to justice and the embracing of the humanity of all our sisters and brothers.

As a (conciliar) Church, we have listened to one another as we received the report of Mission Committee on the ongoing Legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We have heard the pain of sisters and brothers who have been hurt and are still being hurt today. We have heard God in Christ speaking to us in what we believe to be a Kairos moment. We acknowledge our weakness, the ambiguities we embody, and yet, in a spirit of humility and vulnerability, we are urged on by a movement of God's Spirit, calling us to a journey of words and actions born out of what we have felt and heard, a commitment to a future built on equity, justice and love.

To this end, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, gathered here in Birmingham in the year 2020

- *humbly acknowledge our share in and benefit from our nation's participation, and that of our own antecedent bodies, in the Transatlantic Slave Trade.*
- *acknowledge that we speak as those who have shared in and suffered from the legacies of slavery and its appalling consequences for God's world.*
- *offer our apology to God and to our sisters and brothers in Africa, the Caribbean, and their descendants, for all that has created and still perpetuates such hurt which originated from the horror of slavery.*
- *repent of the hurt we have caused, the divisions we have created, our reluctance to face up to the sin of the past, our unwillingness to listen to the pain of our African and Caribbean sisters and brothers, and our silence in the face of racism and injustice today.*
- *commit ourselves, in a true spirit of repentance*
 - *to take what we have heard/learned at this Assembly and share this widely across the whole of the URC and beyond,*
 - *to find constructive ways by which we can turn the words and feelings we have expressed today into concrete actions and contribute to the prophetic work of God's coming kingdom, as we continue to walk the way of Jesus.*
 - *to continue to develop ways of promoting racial justice and justice for all*

As we ask for forgiveness, we invite all of the United Reformed Church to recommit ourselves to walking together in the Spirit of Christ so that all peoples may be blessed, and God's creation healed.

Appendix 7: glossary

CARICOM is an abbreviation of Caribbean Community and is an organisation of fifteen Caribbean nations and dependencies having the primary objectives to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members, and to coordinate foreign policy.

Coward Trust William Coward died in 1738, at the age of 90. Coward's will reflected his support for three Dissenting academies, for churches and ministers' dependents fallen on hard times, and for the extension of the Christian Gospel. A trust was set up to continue the work he so generously unded in his own day. William was a wealthy merchant who owned ships and built up a plantation in Jamaica using enslaved peoples.

CWM The Council for World Mission is a worldwide partnership of Christian churches. The 32 members are committed to sharing their resources of money, people, skills and insights globally to carry out God's mission locally. CWM was restructured for these purposes and inaugurated in 1977 by the 22 churches which had arisen by that date from the work of the London Missionary Society (formed in 1795), the Colonial/Commonwealth Missionary Society (1836/1956) and the assembly mission committee of the Presbyterian Church of England (1847), and had developed through the ecumenical and independence movements of the mid-20th century.

Jim Crow Jim Crow laws were state and local laws that enforced racial segregation in the Southern United States. All were enacted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by White Democrat-dominated state legislatures after the Reconstruction period. The laws were enforced until 1965. In practice, Jim Crow laws mandated racial segregation in all public facilities in the states of the former Confederate States of America and other states, starting in the 1870s and 1880s, and were upheld in 1896, by the U.S. Supreme Court's "separate but equal" legal doctrine for facilities for African Americans.

LMS The London Missionary Society (LMS) was a protestant missionary society formed in England in 1795 'to spread the knowledge of Christ among heathen and other unenlightened nations'. Although broadly interdenominational in scope, the Society was largely Congregationalist in outlook and membership.

LoS The Legacies of [Transatlantic] Slavery is a project initiated by CWM to:

- Assess its own story and complicity with the systems of enslavement and empire
- Understand better the urgency of achieving racial justice and the issues which intersect with it
- Find ways to advocate reparation with its member churches
- Discover anti-Imperial models of Christian mission in today's world.

URC History Society The United Reformed Church History society is open to anyone interested in the history of the denominations which came together in 1972, 1981 and 2000.

White Privilege Privilege can come from any defining feature of a group, such as colour, class, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. Here we focus on privilege simply based on people's colour.

Paper 12

Update on current work

Mission committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Bernie Collins, convenor of mission committee bernie.collins@thecrocker.net Francis Brienen, Deputy General Secretary (Mission) francis.brienen@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information
Draft resolution(s)	<p>1. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the size of the environmental task group be increased from four to six members, and that the Revd David Coleman and Alison Greaves be appointed to the vacancies.</p> <p>2. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, asks all synods and Assembly committees to report back to the environmental task group about their progress in implementing the Environmental Policy by 29 February 2020 with a view to a full report being made at the 2020 General Assembly and annually thereafter.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the work of the mission committee.
Main points	Update on Legacies of Slavery Expanding the membership of the environmental task group and reporting back on the Environmental Policy New mission partner from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan Supporting the mission of churches in rural locations Greenbelt 2019 Evaluation of Vision2020.
Previous relevant documents	Paper 11 to Mission Council, May 2019.
Consultation has taken place with...	Legacies of Slavery task group Environmental task group Nominations committee Rural strategy group Greenbelt planning group.

Summary of impact

Financial	Costs to Assembly of the various items in the paper are covered by the mission committee budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Mission update

1. Legacies of slavery

- 1.1. Mission committee received the report from the Legacies of Slavery task group, which focused on three areas: apology, reparation and white privilege. The report is now offered to Mission Council for further discussion. See paper I1.

2. Environmental task group and Environmental Policy

- 2.1. Over the last 18 months, the environmental task group has co-opted two people to the group who have particular expertise or who enable connections to significant constituencies of the church: the Revd David Coleman, a URC Special Category Minister working for Eco-Congregation Scotland, and Alison Greaves who acts as a link into the Youth Executive. Mission committee agreed that this change should be formalised. It therefore agreed to propose to Mission Council that the size of the environmental task group be increased from four to six, and that David Coleman and Alison Greaves be appointed to the vacancies.
- 2.2. The URC Assembly adopted the current Environmental Policy in 2016 (amended in 2019) and encouraged all committees, synods and local churches to implement it. It also established an environmental task group to serve until July 2022 initially. It did not, however, put in place a timeline for reporting back to Assembly how local churches, synods and committees are engaging with the policy. Mission Committee therefore proposed that all synods and Assembly committees be asked to report back to the environmental task group about their progress in implementing the Environmental Policy by 29 February 2020 with a view to a full report being made at General Assembly in 2020 and annually thereafter.

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

- 3.1. Mission committee is pleased to report that the Revd Yu Fen Chen, mission partner from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, received her visa and arrived in the UK in May. She has now started her ministry with the Taiwanese and Mandarin Fellowship at Lumen URC in London. A service of welcome and thanksgiving was held at Lumen in September and was attended by a delegation from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

4. The United Reformed Church in Rural Areas

- 4.1. Mission committee discussed a report from the National Rural Officer and the URC Chair of the URC/Methodist Rural Strategy Group on the United Reformed Church in Rural Areas. It is thought that around 25% of United Reformed churches are in rural locations and the report highlights the specific issues that affect them and the communities in which they minister. The report notes that churches in rural locations have opportunities to engage with their communities in ways not possible in

larger urban centres. Resourcing these churches for ministry and mission is therefore crucial. The report offers various ways in which this can be done, such as linking rural churches more deliberately with the resources of the Arthur Rank Centre and ensuring that there is a network of advocates in the synods. A review of the National Rural Officer post is about to start and the mission committee agreed that the paper should be sent to the review group for further consideration and action.

5. Greenbelt 2019

- 5.1. The Greenbelt planning group reported to the mission committee that the URC had made a very successful contribution to Greenbelt 2019. Under the theme of 'Walking the Way with Wit and Wisdom', the URC offered a takeaway tent with a daily programme of activities for all ages; as in previous years this space provided a hub for the URC's presence throughout the festival and helped the team to meet and interact with Greenbelters of all ages. The URC programme further included Cake and Debate at the Engine youth venue, a pilgrimage around the Greenbelt site, a panel discussion, roaming liturgies and a Youth Ambassador scheme which enabled nine young people to come along and be part of the team. Next year Greenbelt's theme will be 'Wild at Heart' and the planning group has started thinking how they might link to this. Mission committee expressed its thanks to project co-ordinator Anne Sardeson, who is stepping down from this role, and affirmed Philip Brooks as the new co-ordinator.

6. Evaluation of Vision2020

- 6.1. In 2010 General Assembly accepted vision2020 as the ten-year framework for mission for the URC. Mission committee is now in the process of evaluating what has been done in the past ten years. Information is being gathered on how local churches and synods have used vision2020 for setting mission priorities, in making local mission pledges, in the LMMR process or for assessing mission grants. The first evaluation information was discussed at the meeting and further evidence will now be gathered so that a full report can be brought to the Assembly in 2020. One of the positive findings so far is that lots of churches have used vision2020 grants for their local mission work.

Paper I3

Mission and discipleship Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today

Scratching where it itches

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Richard Church: richard.church@urc.org.uk Francis Brienens: francis.brienens@urc.org.uk
Action required	Consideration and discussion.
Draft resolution(s)	N/A

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	This is an update on the continuing work of Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today, supporting the United Reformed Church's denomination-wide focus on whole-of-life discipleship, requiring Mission Council to consider the future of the work which the steering group has started.
Main points	The message of Walking the Way is still being well received across the URC, especially its open approach to celebrating and sharing existing wisdom. This is demonstrated in the various pieces of work which are summarised in this report. Serious decisions will need to be made in time about the future of this work. It is important to consider and discuss this now.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council 11/15 papers M1 and M2 Mission Council 3/16 paper M1 General Assembly reports 2016, p.11 Mission Council 11/18 paper I2
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission committee Education and learning Communications Nominations Children's and youth work Neil Hudson, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC)

Summary of impact

Financial	Post 2020, Council for World Mission (CWM) funding for Walking the Way will cease.
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<p>External (e.g. ecumenical)</p>	<p>Conversations continue with Churches Together in England, the Church of Scotland, the United Church of Canada and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.</p>
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Scratching where it itches

1. The lie of the land

- 1.1 It is clear from the energy which questions of whole-of-life discipleship have generated at all levels of the United Reformed Church's life, that the denomination's focus on 'Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today' is still scratching where it itches. There has been an especially warm welcome to its open approach, which seeks not to impose particular responses to whole-of-life discipleship, but rather to encourage the asking of questions, to celebrate the success of different approaches in differing contexts and to help share the wisdom of what God is doing across the denomination to build and equip people to live out their faith in their own, everyday reality.
- 1.2 In considering the following summary of Walking the Way's progress, Mission Council is invited to reflect on the significance of this focus, not just for now, but for the future of the URC, and to think about how the successful and useful elements of the focus might be harnessed, moving forward.

2. Visits to synods and other places

- 2.1 As part of the steering group's aim to celebrate and build on existing work and wisdom across the URC, Project Manager Simon Peters has continued his visits to synods and local churches. Most recently, he has spent time in Northern, North Western, East Midlands and Wales, as well as attending events in Mersey and Thames North synods. Stories and findings from these visits will be shared in due course as Simon takes time to digest and unpack all he has seen. It continues to be very encouraging to see lots of different, effective ways of nurturing whole-of-life disciples across the denomination and opportunities to support this further.

3. Communications

- 3.1 Work has continued with colleagues in communications to ensure effective plans for keeping the Walking the Way webpages and social media, as well as publications such as News Update and Digest up to date with Walking the Way news and stories. Such plans are in place to take us through to the end of the year, with one individual discipleship story and one church story being posted online per month, with three social media posts scheduled each week.

This means that, regardless of anything else we might share, there will always be regular news and stories planned for release ahead of time.

- 3.2 Work continues to ensure that resources available through the Walking the Way resource map and page are up to date and as easy to access as possible, especially given feedback that the busy nature of the resource map can be quite overwhelming.

4. Merchandise, resources and opportunities

- 4.1 Following discussion, the steering group agreed to look further into the production of more Walking the Way resources for use during important times in the Christian year. The Lent and Advent materials have been particularly popular in providing simple, accessible ways for people to explore whole-of-life discipleship.
- 4.2 The production of more merchandise to help share the message of whole-of-life discipleship more widely has also been agreed on the understanding that any merchandise purchased will be as ecologically sustainable as possible.
- 4.3 With the URC's 50th anniversary coming up in 2022, it is clear that whole-of-life discipleship is at the heart of the celebrations. The steering group is currently considering ideas for this.

5. Accompaniment

- 5.1 Work with the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) on a pilot accompaniment programme for whole-of-life discipleship continues.
- 5.2 Participant churches have been identified in Southern Synod and are ready to begin work this month. Northern synod is still working on recruiting churches.
- 5.3 Work with the LICC is ongoing to establish effective ways of gathering and analysing data from the pilot which will be useful as the Steering Group seeks to shape the programme for use across different URC contexts, including analysing feedback from churches across the denomination which already have experience of working with the LICC.

6. Stepwise

- 6.1 The steering group continues to work closely with education and learning to develop Stepwise as an intergenerational, participant-focussed learning experience for whole-of-life discipleship development, offered as a programmatic element of Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today.

7. Spirituality

- 7.1 Across the URC and beyond, people seem to find it challenging to describe why we do what we do in worship and to articulate why this is relevant for those parts of our lives which sit outside the Church. Research is currently being carried out into the worship needs of the denomination by the Discipleship department. We each have a role to play in contributing to the quality of worship in our local contexts/communities.
- 7.2 The continued refinement of the Walking the Way resource map, along with the production of more seasonal Walking the Way resources will help to alleviate this in part by encouraging people to engage more confidently in leading and sharing worship. An upcoming event at Westminster College in early 2020, hosted by URC Spirituality, will also be useful, as will the results of the worship research, which will help to determine further action.
- 7.4 Generally, people need encouragement and confidence in worship and spirituality. As such, the steering group will continue to hold this as an important priority. Working ecumenically on whole-of-life discipleship is vital. This could be a particularly useful place to continue building connections with fellow denominations and groups.

8. Online Church

- 8.1 Following conversation with four existing online churches, URC Youth Executive and a wider discussion within the steering group, it seems worth pursuing the possibility of an online space where different groups within the United Reformed Church could explore the development of community and faith online. This has been inspired in part by a desire to support young adults in their whole-of-life discipleship development, but is by no means only relevant for younger people.
- 8.2 Such an approach, if successful, would involve significant long-term investment and work, particularly on issues such as pastoral care, security and safeguarding. As such, a paper is being prepared for the spring 2020 meeting of Mission Council with some more detailed information and proposals.

9. Diversity

- 9.1 Following acceptance that, as with many aspects of the URC's life and work, there is a lack of diversity in the people involved in leading and developing the Walking the Way focus, the steering group recently enjoyed a fruitful

discussion on the underlying issues behind this imbalance as well as ways in which the group might deal with the situation.

- 9.2 Along with other groups and committees, the steering group will be accepting the advice of Global and Intercultural Ministries to agree a set of questions, so that the steering group will be able to ask about all of its life and work with regards to nurturing and growing diversity.

10. Impact and future

- 10.1 As we move towards the end of CWM Mission Support Programme funding for Walking the Way at the close of 2020, it is becoming increasingly important to consider the impact which Walking the Way has had thus far, noting the unique contributions which it has made to the development of whole-of-life discipleship across the United Reformed Church so that we can establish ways of enabling this to continue.
- 10.2 The steering group is currently in the process of refining its evaluation plan to ensure that this will bring forth information, stories and data to help in this task, as well as continuing, more generally, to ask every synod, church and group we come into contact with, 'how is, or could, Walking the Way be useful to whole-of-life discipleship development?'
- 10.3 It is already clear from conversations across the URC that questions and concerns about worship, spirituality, mission and ministry in relation to whole-of-life discipleship are very much shared by everyone, and that there is a strong case for continuing the work which the steering group has started, but this is, of course a matter for General Assembly and Mission Council to consider.

Paper J1

List of nominations

Nominations committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Convenor: The Revd Ray Adams ray.adams12@btinternet.com Secretary: Mr George Faris nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk
Action required	Parts one and two need decision; part three is for information.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in section one of the report to the list of nominations agreed by Mission Council in May 2019.2) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints according to the nominations in section two of the report.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) To clarify various details of the nominations list.2) To appoint and reappoint members of various committees and representatives of the Church.3) Creation of three review and nominating groups.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Nominations list as at August 2019: www.urc.org.uk/images/Yearbook/Nominations-List.pdf
Consultation has taken place with...	All synods are represented on the committee

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Some roles involve ecumenical contact and collaboration.

1. 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 May 2019 meeting of Mission Council. The numbers below refer to paragraphs and sections in the full nominations list:

Appointments made by the Officers of Assembly

The Officers of Assembly acting, as authorized by Mission Council (see minute 19/20). on behalf of General Assembly appointed those listed below to serve from 1 July 2019:

<i>Ref</i>	<i>Committee/Group</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Years</i>
2.2.1	Panel for General Assembly appointments	The Revd Sohail Ejaz	Member [†]	2
2.2.1	Panel for General Assembly appointments	The Revd Raymond Singh	Member [†]	2
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	Mrs Barbara Goom	Member [†]	5
2.4	Disciplinary process commission panel	The Revd Naison Hove	Member [†]	5
4.1	Ministries committee	The Revd Sally Willett	Member	4
4.1.3	Ministries – Maintenance of Ministry subcommittee	Mr David Black	Member [†]	2
5.4	Finance committee	Ms Joana Marfoh	Member	4
5.4	Finance committee	The Revd Wilbert Sayimani	Member	4

[†] = extension of term of service, the default is a new appointment.

2.4 Disciplinary process commission panel

David N Jones has a doctorate.

2.7 Safeguarding advisory group

End-dates have been agreed for the termed members so that one of them retires each year from 2020 to 2022. The full membership is:

Convenor: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Secretary: URC Safeguarding Adviser

The Revd Geoff Wright [2020]

The Revd Zaidie Orr [2021]

Mr Paul Smillie [2022]

Ex officio: Head of Children's+Youth Work, Secretary to Ministries, EM2/3 Officer

3.1 Mission committee

The Revd Alex Mabbs is now the Southern Synod representative serving to the end of General Assembly 2023.

4.1 Ministries committee

The Revd Jacky Embrey is now the synod moderators' representative serving to the end of General Assembly 2023.

8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church liaison group

The Revd Paul Whittle is now the synod moderator serving as a co-convenor to the end of General Assembly 2020.

11.3 Congregational fund board

Mrs Jackie Haws resigned in January 2019.

11.12 United Reformed Church History Society Council

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar is serving to the end of General Assembly 2024, not 2023.

2. New appointments and re-appointments

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council makes the following appointments. The numbers below refer to paragraphs and sections in the full nominations list:

1.8 Business committee

The Revd Adrian Bulley to be convenor-elect of the business committee with immediate effect until the end of General Assembly 2020 and then convenor for 4 years.

2.2 Nominations committee

Mr George Faris to serve as secretary of the nominations committee for an additional year until the end of General Assembly 2022, to provide an overlap with the new convenor serving from General Assembly 2021.

4.1 Ministries committee

The Revd Paul Whittle to serve as convenor of the ministries committee for an additional year until the end of General Assembly 2021, to provide a longer overlap with the new Secretary for Ministries.

9.2 Westminster College board of governors

The Revd Nigel Uden to be re-appointed as convenor of the Westminster College board of governors for a second term of six years until the end of General Assembly 2026.

Mr Chris Wright to be re-appointed as clerk to the Westminster College board of governors for a final term of two years until the end of General Assembly 2022.

Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid to be a governor of Westminster College with immediate effect until the end of General Assembly 2025.

11.12 World Day of Prayer national committee

The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale to represent the URC on the World Day of Prayer national committee with immediate effect until the end of General Assembly 2022.

3. Review and nominating groups

There is a requirement for three review and nominating groups for Synod Moderators:

- a) Mersey Synod Moderator review group
The group will be convened by the Revd Samuel Silungwe (East Midlands).
- b) East Midlands Synod Moderator nominating group
The group will be convened by the Revd Raymond Singh (Southern).
- c) Southern Synod Moderator nominating group
The group will be convened by the Revd Bill Young (West Midlands).

Paper M1

Resourcing worship research

General Secretariat

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	A worship reference group be set up: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to respond to requests from churches• to curate existing resources• to maintain a regular worship mailing with updates, news, and links to good worship practice

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper introduces research findings and suggests a way of meeting the needs revealed in them.
Main points	As resolution.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, March 2018, Paper M1.
Consultation has taken place with...	Faith and order; Synod Moderators; Walking the Way steering group; CYDOs; URC Music; URC Spirituality; TDOs.

Summary of impact

Financial	Meeting costs around 1,000 pounds per year.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Resourcing worship

1. We set out to ask about worship in the United Reformed Church and the potential need to support individuals charged with preparing and leading worship. Our basic research question was whether the URC as a whole, and in particular parts, needs specific worship support, and more particularly how people are learning about and being supported to lead worship in the absence of a central URC group since the loss of the doctrine, prayer and worship committee.
2. Because worship is the one thing in which every member of the URC engages, no matter the style or setting, it seemed right to reach every strand of interest in the URC. A small group representing Walking the Way, Stepwise, discipleship, and faith and order, with reference to the URC General Secretariat, formed a list of interested parties, set out in tables on following pages. This helped us identify

groups and individuals to contact and it gave us, in the way of research polls, a thorough cross-section of the opinion of the whole church.

Sample size

- The data sampling results are shown in the appendix. Here we report on the reach of the research. The responses numbered 84 representing over 300 individuals. As each focus group/committee had a good size membership for discussion, and most SOARs were done by groups of people, we can cautiously estimate that over 336 individuals contributed to the research, with 76% of the stakeholder groups participating. Though we can't say that the research touched even 1% of the membership, we can say that over three quarters of the identified interested parties in worship were reached.

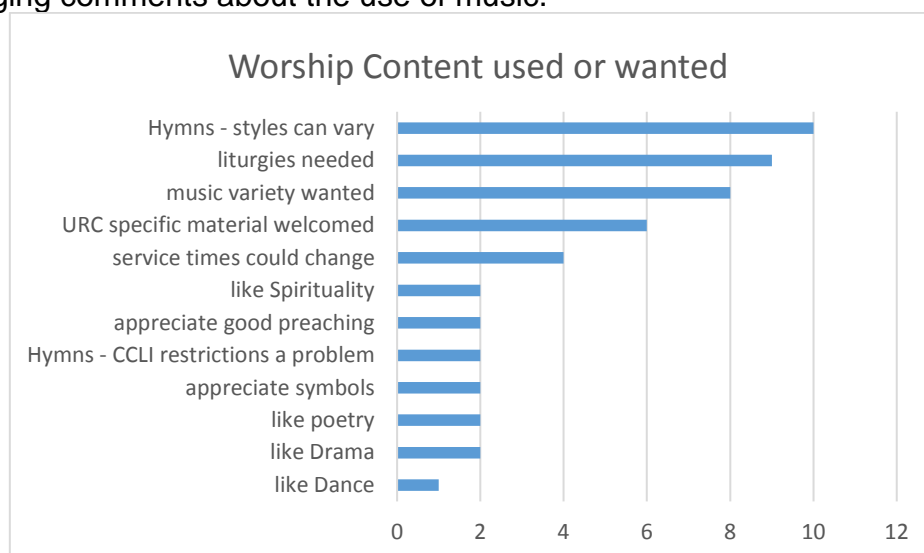
Methodology

- To determine whether there was a need to resource worship leaders, we decided to gain information from individuals, URC journals, and URC social media, using a range of methods to allow us to ask only a few questions from those who feel burdened, and ask more nuanced questions of both existing information and individuals. Finally, we agreed to conduct the analysis by one or two people to summarise the findings and to conduct a small learning exchange from different interest groups to see the summaries and to consider in what direction the URC might be encouraged to be led.

Findings

- The themes mentioned in the chart below arose from statements where people talked about what they already used, had appreciated, and had found frustrating.

Putting the two themes of hymn style and music together, we can see wide ranging comments about the use of music.



“Music has tended to be very traditional with very few more modern worship hymns/songs known or included”. and “standard of music is usually fairly low, with weak or non-existent choirs and music groups. If a traditional hymnbook is in use, it is normally Rejoice and Sing, but various editions of Mission Praise and Songs of Fellowship are often used.”

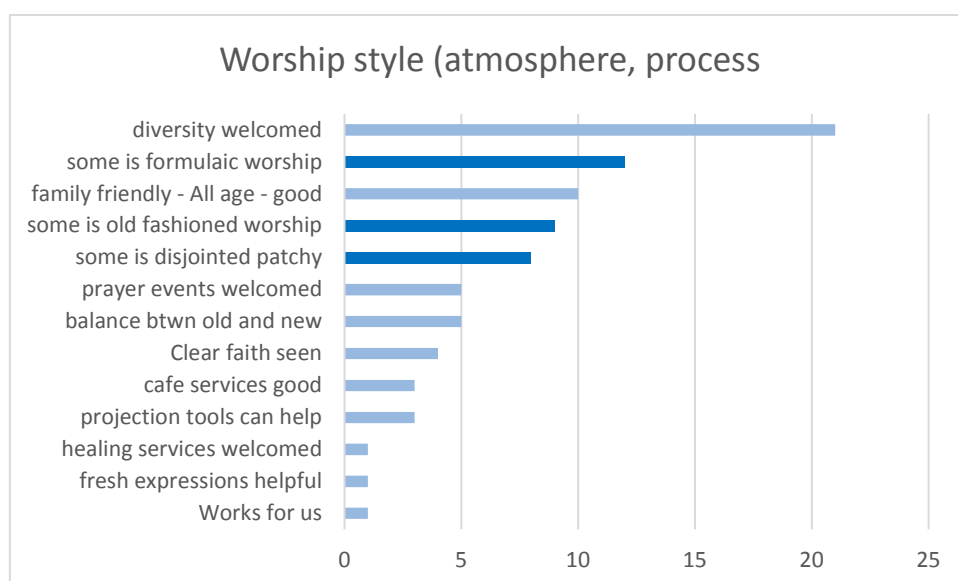
Suggestions were for words and music that are more suitable in 21st century i.e. “which touched the soul and ring accord.” People like to “sing new words to familiar tunes, like to sing hymns outside of Rejoice and Sing, and we sing with joy and enjoyment” and there is an appeal for no more “hymn sandwich” order of services, freer imaginative weekly services especially mid-week. One noted, “some modern hymns we learn by singing them – sometimes we sing them once and then not again which is a pity”

Specific liturgy needed was:

- More material for leading worship with teens
- Prayers that are meaningful today
- It would be good to have more resources ready tailored for projection – film clips, reflections accompanied by pictures. Finding these can be very time consuming
- Morning Prayer resources, similar to the one used by the C of E, suggestions for more Contemplative Worship, some resources for children), art resources for young people and adults
- I would find some good, adaptable prayers useful, as I find myself increasingly struggling to write any that say anything new, especially when it comes to the Intercessory prayers.

The desire for more diversity was the biggest comment about style. Added to the negative comments that worship could be formulaic, old fashioned, and disjointed, there was a very clear need expressed for new approaches to worship. Some liked a balance between old and new, and a few mentioned specific service types. Café style and Messy worship were noted many times either as good, or as an aspiration.

There was encouragement to churches to be more relaxed and flexible in approach and less reliant on feeding all worshippers through one Sunday morning service. Appeals were made for worship on varying days of the week, to allow worship to move to include everyday things, and not always be held in a set aside space. Many comments hoped to change the worship environment, to make it warm, comfortable, inspiring and flexible.



One group of churches made a commitment to have more diversity of substance and style [e.g. healing; themed; cafe services], more participation and involvement by the congregation, to develop the use of music, re-instate the Worship Group, and to offer more opportunities to meet in prayer

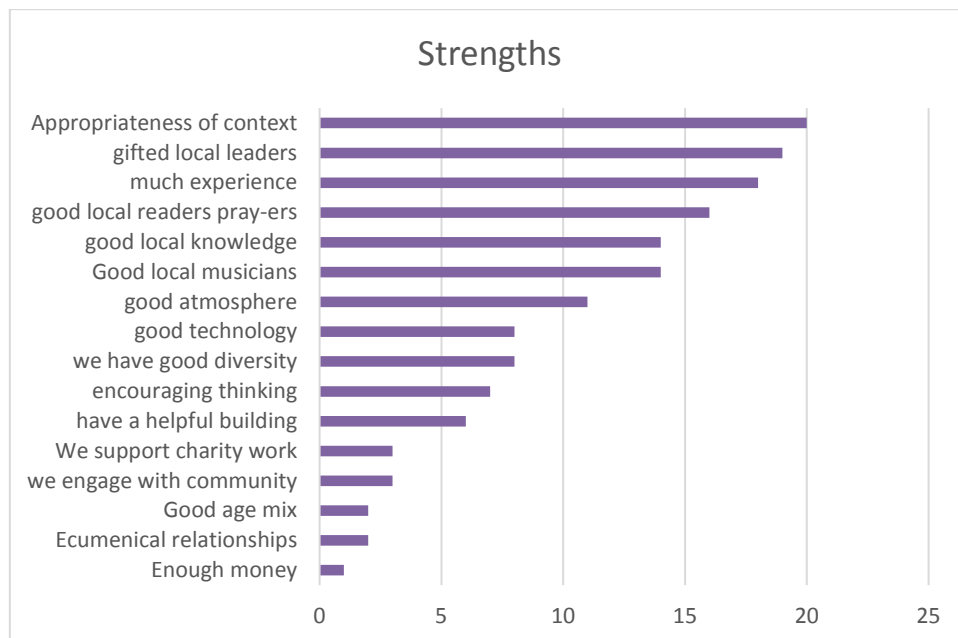
One group appealed for a greater sense of whole worship e.g. Confession and absolution, thanksgiving and intercession, not just 'praise'

An interviewee noted that, "In a minority of places, worship uses predominantly 20th century songs and musical styles (with a few embracing the 21st century!), a more informal style of leadership, only one Bible reading rather than two, and more interaction with the congregation. These services are often longer than in more traditional churches and sometimes involve teenagers and children. In some churches, particularly where there is a significant BME dimension to the congregation, people join and leave as the service progresses."

For those who are concerned about worship leader variety, this is notable; "Different styles [are] appreciated. We have some visiting preachers, as well as our own minister, which give variety and a different dimension."

A SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Resources) process was used and the following tables chart responses:

A significant number of people felt that the worship they experienced, or led, was appropriate to context and had gifted people to help shape and deliver it. There was good atmosphere, some (!) good technology and encouragement. One congregation noted that there was enough money to do worship well.



People talked much about authentic worship, full of praise and faith affirmations, about appropriate music to situation and members. A number wrote of good inclusion of the local community.

Opportunities

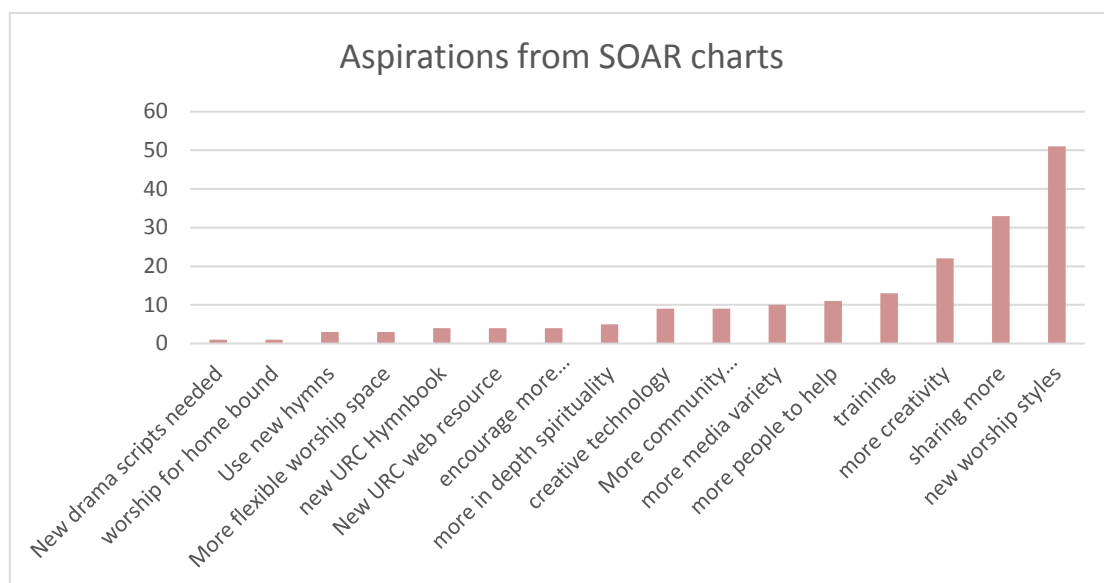
It has to be said that not many people noted opportunities which already existed to enhance or change worship. Five respondents say that worship is taken outside of churches, though that rises to seven with the addition of taking churches to homes.



Aspirations

Without doubt, leaders and congregational members want new worship styles, more sharing between leader and congregation, and more creativity. A worship leader noted, "People often ask me if I think the church will die out, I always reply 'no', but that I think it will (and has to) change." There were appeals for flexibility, worship carried out in fresh,

different ways, training, more involvement with the community, and more creative technology.



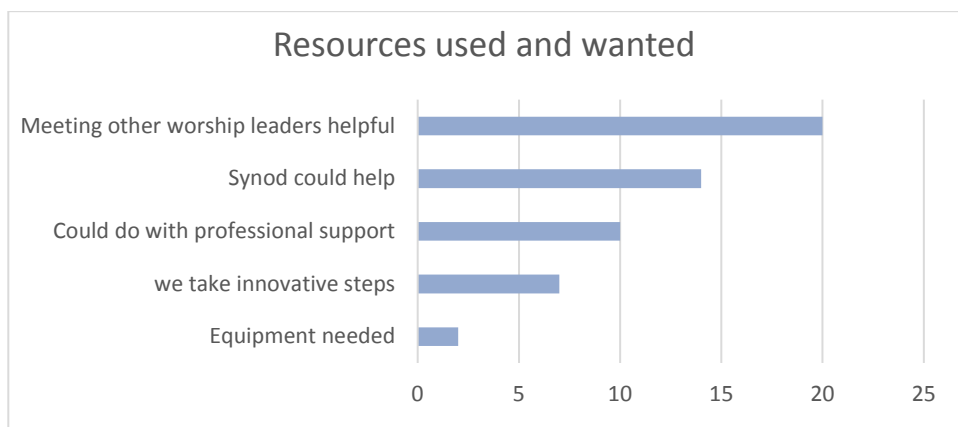
There were a significant number of comments about having silent, reflective moments during worship. Some wanted more interactive services with more time given to the

congregation, where sermons can include questions and answers. There were noted aspirations for messy church, café church, breakfast church, early morning services for young families, fellowship worship over lunch or tea/coffee, faith breakfasts, Bible lunches, and flexibility in worship is held to accommodate a variety of lifestyles.

There was an appeal to revise worship theology to be more Reformed, with “more about the WORD of God, not just entertainment and stories.”

A few wished for a wider array of liturgical resources with various visual and dramatic presentations.

Resources



Gathering worship leaders together was a significant opinion. Some either attend or want regular synod worship meetings to share good practice and “chew the fat on the lectionaries”, with many noting that being able to share experiences with other worship leaders is always helpful.

There were suggestions to encourage and fund in-service training for preachers, drawing on quality scholars and other resources ecumenically, not reinventing wheels denominationally.

All this data was presented at the learning exchange day. The main themes were clear: a desire for more diversity in times of public worship; creative approaches to be adopted,

with the opportunity to meet others engaged in worship preparation particularly valued for the dissemination of new materials and fresh approaches. However, participants in the learning exchange day also asked how these developments might be fostered within the Church.

Conclusions

In the light of the helpful results from the research it seemed that the most practical way to carry forward the work was to form a small but representative worship reference group of six to eight people. The purpose of the group would be to: curate and advocate quality worship resources, linking with Walking the Way and eventually, with Stepwise Faith Filled Worship. Three objectives were identified:

- a) Curate and disseminate good worship practice, including bespoke liturgies for specific occasions as diverse as mayoral inductions, crematoria remembrance services, and even messy church baptisms!
- b) Support worship preparation, by gathering worship leaders in every synod who could support worship development within synods
- c) Maintain a regular worship mailing with updates, news, and links to good worship practice, resources and examples.

Such a group would be accountable to the faith and order committee. By this means, the church can create a body which would exercise a proactive concern for the development of collective worship throughout the denomination.

To assist it in its work, it is envisaged that the group would meet physically at least twice a year and at other times by video conferencing. It will keep Mission Council/General Assembly informed of developments by reporting regularly through the faith and order committee.

Appendix: data collection methods

Data streams (type of data collected)

Data Stream	Description
Data Mining	Interrogating existing data held by respondent group, commissioners or other stakeholders which is considered relevant to research questions (<i>not</i> desk research which is research outside the research set): Specifically: REFORM articles/letters re worship

	<p>URC Ministers Facebook pages for worship topics</p> <p>Anonymised letters from secretariat re worship</p> <p>Other data as realized</p>
Focus Groups	Structure and unstructured conversations with participants invited according to their worship interest and experience
Interviews	<p>Structured or unstructured conversations with identified dialogue partners (identified after stakeholder analysis and any respondent stratification)</p> <p>Specifically:</p> <p>GA Moderators who have visited many churches</p> <p>Lay preaching assessors who visit churches to mark students</p> <p>Others as identified</p>
Peer to Peer	<p>Formal recorded conversations between those who plan and lead worship</p> <p>(identified after stakeholder analysis and any respondent stratification)</p> <p>Could use the Appreciative Inquiry SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, resources) to support conversation and to capture ideas</p>
Survey Monkey (perhaps)	<p>Questionnaire platform (identified after stakeholder analysis and any respondent stratification)</p> <p>It could be that the questionnaire is <i>never circulated</i></p>

Data collection outcomes

For every piece of research, information about the topic already exists in some form from the people who are already connected to the research purpose. Data mining looks at what is held inside the world of the particular research focus. It is quite different from desk research, which is research outside of world of the research focus. So, for our worship research, we planned to look at URC conversations about worship, not to look at the wider world of what worship ought to be or could be. Specifically, we planned to look at *Reform* for articles and letters about worship, to scour (with due confidentiality), the URC Ministers Facebook pages for worship topics, to see any letters to the secretariat about worship, and to look at any other information people felt like sharing.

As it was, we didn't have the capacity to fully analyse *Reform*, and there weren't any letters to the secretariat. We decided to withdraw the Facebook browsing, as it is not the page's purpose or rule. Other information shared with us was email content when the sender attached a SOAR (method stream three), and documents from churches.

Resulting contact:

Data Streams	Data collected	active conversation	No data received	no contact was able to be made	Data collection point after data cut-off	No capacity
Data Mining						
REFORM articles						1
URC Minister's Facebook pages (by member)						
Letters to secretariat about worship			1			
Other data as realised	1					
Total existing data types searched	1					

Focus Groups

We planned to have structured and unstructured conversations with participants invited according to their worship interest and experience, in a classic focus group style. To gain maximum contact with minimum added time for individuals, we decided to attend meetings which were already organised in order to ask three key questions of each group:

Tell me about worship you have experienced in your travels in the URC.

1. If you could change one thing, what would it be?
2. What would you put in place to make that happen?

We either attended meetings, or asked members of meetings to discuss the three questions and to give us feedback. We were delighted to have made contact with 16 of the 21 interested groups we identified. Though ministry students and Resource Centres for Learning couldn't contribute formally, there is evidence from other groups that representatives of these interest areas contributed opinion.

Data Streams	Data collected	active conversation	No data received	no contact was able to be made	Data collection point after data cut-off
Focus Group Activity					
3 questions and distribution of SOARs					
Lay Preachers Commission Consultation	1				
Ministers	1				
Elders	1	1			
BAME congregations	1				
members of congregations	1				
Musicians				1	
Faith and Order	1				
Walking the Way steering group	1				
URC Communications (Prayer Handbook)		1			
Moderators	1				
EM1 Students					1
RCLs					1
Roots publications team			1		
TDOs	1				
Mission Enablers (MEN)	1				
Youth Executive	1				
Children and Youth Committee	1				
CYDOs Team	1				
Silence and Retreats	1				
Joint Discipleship meeting					1
<i>Total stakeholders identified</i>	21				
Total stakeholder types reached	14	2	1	1	3
<i>percentage of stakeholders reached</i>	76%				

Interviews

Structured or unstructured conversations were planned with General Assembly

Data Streams	Data collected	active conversation	No data received	no contact was able to be made	Data collection point after data cut-off
Interviews					
GA Moderators who visited churches	4				
Lay Preaching assessors	6				
others			1		
Total interviews	10				

Moderators who have visited many churches, with Lay preaching assessors who visit churches to mark students.

Peer to Peer

Formal recorded conversations between those who plan and lead worship, using the Appreciative Inquiry SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, resources) tool. We planned peer to peer methods, knowing that conversations often bring out much more information than individual feedback, and that by encouraging conversation to answer the SOAR had the potential to encourage conversation about worship in general

To gain maximum coverage of the geography of the URC, those who visited meetings for focus group activity either took the SOAR charts to the meeting, or asked people to contact Church House. We planned on distributing two per group member, so that members could take them back to their home church and share the SOARs with others. In Appreciative Inquiry practice, SOARs are filled in when a facilitator explains them in a flow from previous appreciative work. Using SOARs in a way which disconnected them from the Appreciative Inquiry purposes was risky, and a few respondents found them confusing. However, they were an overwhelming success in giving us rich information about worship variety and need. It was clear that in some cases, SOARs were filled in by an individual on behalf of a church group, others were filled in by individuals within a group, and others were filled in by single worship leaders.

Data Streams	Data collected	active conversation	No data received	no contact was able to be made	Data collection point after data cut-off
Peer to Peer (SOAR charts done by groups)					
Students			1		
worship leaders	32				
members	14				
leaders and members combined	17				
Total SOARs	63				

Paper M2

Changes to the Rules of Procedure

Clerk of General Assembly

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the changes to the Rules of Procedure contained within paper M2 of Mission Council November 2019, pursuant to the implementation of decisions of principle made by the General Assembly of 2018, with immediate effect.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Altering the Church's Rules of Procedure to effect decisions already taken about the frequency of General Assembly and about the election of its Moderators.
Main points	Assembly to be annual; candidates for Moderator to address Assembly in two defined ways before the ballot.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, March 2018, paper Y1 and minute 18/18 General Assembly, July 2018, resolution nine
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretary.

Summary of impact

Financial	An annual Assembly has certain costs, to which we have already committed ourselves. Writing this decision into our Rules entails no further cost.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	As above: the decision to meet annually has some ecumenical impact; the legal drafting does not.

Changes to the Rules of Procedure

Resolution 17 of General Assembly 2018 instructed the Clerk to bring detailed proposals for changes to the Rules of Procedure to effect decisions of principle made by the Assembly. I now bring a first tranche of these. If either of the changes currently being considered by synods is agreed by Assembly next summer, there will be a further tranche of changes.

The numbered headings below refer to paragraphs in the Church's Rules of Procedure (The Manual, section C).

Changes to facilitate an annual Assembly

Current text:

- 1.1 The Assembly shall meet at least once in every alternate year. The scheduled meeting in each such year, the place and dates of which shall be determined by a preceding Assembly, shall be the ordinary meeting of the Assembly. At the completion of the business of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly is adjourned. The members of Assembly at any time between ordinary meetings of the Assembly remain those who were included on the Roll of Assembly at the constitution of the immediately preceding ordinary meeting of the Assembly. Any meeting of the Assembly other than the ordinary meeting shall be a special meeting.

Revised text:

- 1.1 The Assembly shall meet at least once in each year. The scheduled meeting in each year, the place and dates of which shall normally be determined by a preceding Assembly, shall be the ordinary meeting of the Assembly. At the completion of the business of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly is adjourned. The members of Assembly at any time between ordinary meetings of the Assembly remain those who were included on the Roll of Assembly at the constitution of the immediately preceding ordinary meeting of the Assembly. Any meeting of the Assembly other than the ordinary meeting shall be a special meeting.

Changes to the voting procedure for electing Moderators

Current text:

- 3.3 A nomination for election as Moderator of the General Assembly shall be made by a synod, the consent of the nominee not being required. The nomination shall be in writing under the hand of the Clerk of the synod and received by the General Secretary not later than the 31 March immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly.
- 3.5 If after 31 March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations, in either or both categories, the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the Clerks of the synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated and a brief biography, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15 May.
- 3.8 Members of the Assembly shall vote by means of a voting paper containing the name, the usual designation and the church of membership, of each of those accepting nomination which shall be sent by the General Secretary by ordinary post to each such member before the commencement of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly. Brief indication of the reasons for the nomination, as supplied by the synod, may be circulated with the ballot paper. The General Assembly may in any case authorise further means of informing the members about those accepting nomination.

- 3.9 Normally, the General Assembly shall vote to elect the Moderators of the Assembly by secret ballot as an item of business following prayer during the meeting of the Assembly. The ballot boxes shall be delivered to the tellers by whom alone they shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.

Revised text:

- 3.3 A nomination for election as Moderator of the General Assembly shall be made by a synod, the consent of the nominee not being required. The nomination shall be in writing under the hand of the Clerk of the synod and received by the General Secretary not later than the 31 March immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly, and accompanied by a brief biography of the nominee and a note of the Synod's reasons for making the nomination.
- 3.5 If after 31 March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations, in either or both categories, the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the Clerks of the synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated, a brief biography, and a note of the Synod's reasons for making the nomination, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15 May.
- 3.8 Members of the Assembly shall vote by means of a voting paper containing the name, the usual designation, and the church of membership, of each of those accepting nomination which shall be sent by the General Secretary either by ordinary post to each such member before the commencement of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly, or on arrival at the meeting for those receiving their papers electronically. Brief indication of the reasons for the nomination, as supplied by the synod, and a brief biography will be circulated with the ballot paper. The General Assembly may in any case authorise further means of informing the members about those accepting nomination.
- 3.9 Normally, the General Assembly shall vote to elect the Moderators of the Assembly by secret ballot as an item of business following prayer during the meeting of the Assembly. Before voting commences each nominee shall address the Assembly on their biography for up to three minutes, and shall answer a question, in no more than three minutes, posed by the Moderator. The ballot boxes shall be delivered to the tellers by whom alone they shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.

Draft resolution:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the changes to the Rules of Procedure contained within paper M2 of Mission Council November 2019, pursuant to the implementation of decisions of principle made by the General Assembly of 2018, with immediate effect.

Paper M3

Roll of Mission Council

Clerk of General Assembly

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Michael Hopkins michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	See below.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Mission Council discussed at its last meeting the make-up of Mission Council. This resolution gathers the outcome of that discussion into one coherent list, for better future reference.
Main points	Synods have four reps, who may include the Moderator; all four to be members of Assembly. The Assistant Clerk is added.
Previous relevant documents	Paper N1, May 2019
Consultation has taken place with...	Mission Council, at its last meeting.

Summary of impact

Financial	None, as this merely makes clear decisions already taken.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	We continue to value the presence of two ecumenical observers on Mission Council.

Resolution:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council confirms that the membership of Mission Council shall be as set out in resolution 19E of General Assembly 2014 until the close of General Assembly 2020, and from that point shall then be:

1. Moderator(s) of Assembly
2. Moderator(s)-elect of Assembly
3. Immediate past Moderator(s)
4. General Secretary
5. Deputy General Secretaries
6. Clerk and Assistant Clerk
8. Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer
10. Conveners of all Assembly standing committees, except the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee
11. Four further representatives of each Synod from among that Synod's representatives to the immediately preceding General Assembly.

12. Three representatives of URC Youth
13. Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust

With the exception of those in category 5 (the Deputy General Secretaries) all the above shall be members of the United Reformed Church.

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council further resolves that:

The Legal Adviser and the Convenor of the Law and Polity Advisory Group shall be in attendance with the right to speak at all times, but not to use consensus cards or to vote.

The three Deputy General Secretaries, who are members of Mission Council, are expected to attend, and they may direct other staff members to attend, with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote, when the business so requires. These other staff members should therefore only expect to be at Mission Council where this has been negotiated and agreed in advance.

Up to two ecumenical representatives may attend with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote.

Also present shall be the Moderators' Chaplains and the Minute Secretary. These may participate in group sessions, and may speak during plenary sessions with the consent of the Moderator.

From time to time there may be visitors and/or observers present by prior arrangement with the General Secretary. They shall not have the right to speak or participate in any way during plenary or group sessions, unless with the explicit consent of the Moderator.

All references to the Mission Council shall be taken as referring to the Assembly Executive or another successor body unless and until the General Assembly decides otherwise.

N.B. The references to Moderator(s) in lines one, two and three refer to both Moderators, as long as we have two; if in the future there were only one Moderator, then each of these lines would refer to one person only.

Paper M4

Appointments to the General Secretariat

Moderators of General Assembly

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Nigel Uden nigel.uden@urc.org.uk Mr Derek Estill derek.estill@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision re General Secretary; take note of report re DGS(D).
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints the Revd Dr John Bradbury to serve as General Secretary of the Church from 1 June 2020 to the end of General Assembly 2027.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Commending a nomination and noting the work, thus far, of an appointment group.
Main points	As resolution.
Previous relevant documents	Papers O1 and O2, May 2019
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of the respective nomination and appointment groups.

Summary of impact

Financial	These appointments are within budget. While there will be some extra cost in having a three month overlap in the General Secretary role, there would be other costs in not doing so.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The GS post in particular has a lot of ecumenical contact.

1. The Revd John Proctor having intimated his intention to retire as General Secretary in August 2020, Mission Council received proposals from the human resources advisory group about the job description and person specification. These being approved, a nominating group was created, convened by The Revd Nigel Uden as a Moderator of the General Assembly, and including representatives of the URC's Committee Conveners elected by Mission Council, and people from the Assembly Appointments Panel, identified by the nominations committee.

2. Advertising led to people being nominated, three of whom then submitted an application form. All three sets of detailed paperwork were appreciated by the panel, and revealed people who already exercised significant and valued ministries. Two candidates were interviewed, and after careful consideration the nominating group unanimously brings to Mission Council the name of the Revd Dr John Bradbury.
3. Dr Bradbury is a minister serving Downing Place United Reformed Church, Cambridge, Stetchworth and Cheveley URC and Whittlesford URC. He received his theological education at the universities of Edinburgh, Tübingen and Cambridge. He was ordained in 2004, to work as part of the ecumenical team in the centre of Liverpool, and to minister with Earle Road URC in Picton, an inner-city area. As part of this work, John worked closely with the Bread Church, part of the Somewhere Else community, an early Fresh Expression (new type) of church. In 2007, John was appointed to teach Systematic Theology and Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge, where he eventually served as Vice-Principal and for a substantial period as Acting Principal.
4. The nominating group warmly commends Dr Bradbury to Mission Council, as a minister gifted with theological acuity, strategic thinking, pastoral sensitivity and a warm personality.
5. Subject to Mission Council's approval, he will commence work on 1 June 2020, shadowing John Proctor, and will be inducted at the General Assembly in July.
6. The Revd Richard Church also retires next summer, on 31 July 2020, and we shall therefore have a vacancy for a new Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship). Appointment to this post is determined by the interviewing group, and does not depend on Mission Council decision. However, it is important that Mission Council know of the work of the appointing group, convened by Mr Derek Estill.
7. The vacancy has been advertised, a number of serious applications were received, and interviews were held on 15 October. However, the group is not ready at the moment to make an appointment, and it will therefore continue its work, reporting to Mission Council in March and if need be to General Assembly in July.
8. Incidentally, the reason that the General Secretary's post has been addressed by a nomination group while the Deputy's post is being handled by an appointment group goes back to a 2010 Assembly resolution. Synod Moderators and Officers of Assembly are nominated by the groups that interview them but can only be formally appointed by Mission Council or General Assembly. Whereas other Assembly-appointed staff are directly appointed by the group chosen to interview for the post. The General Secretary comes under the first of those rubrics; the DGS (Discipleship) under the second.

Paper 01

Report on recent work

Human resources advisory group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Geoff Shaw, Convenor geoffshaw2810@sky.com Jane Baird, Secretary jane.baird@urc.org.uk
Action required	Take note.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To update Mission Council on the recent work of the group.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Previous HRAG reports to Mission Council.
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

1. Membership

Geoff Shaw (Convenor), Alastair Forsyth, Bridget Fosten, Mike Gould, Revd. John Proctor, General Secretary (ex officio), Jane Baird, Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) (ex officio).

These members bring to the group a wide range of HR and Management experience within the Church, the Public Sector and in Industry.

2. Remit.

HRAG was established in October 2012 and its remit reviewed by the May 2015 meeting of Mission Council. The remit is to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for Mission Council/General Assembly/URC Trust and Church House staff. In November 2018 Mission Council agreed an amendment to HRAG's remit to clarify the length of service for its members.

3. Routine work

- 3.1 Recruitment.** There has been little turnover in the staff at Church House compared to recent reports. However, recruitment activity has been intense with regard to vacancies for General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), Secretary for Ministries, Principal of Westminster College and Synod Moderators (North Western, Yorkshire, East Midlands and Southern). Recruitment for these significant roles is undertaken with much care and due to the number of people involved requires much coordination and administration. The preparatory work for the recruitment of General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary required additional meetings and liaison with the General Assembly Moderators. (Paper O1 Mission Council May 2019 refers). At the time of writing HRAG is pleased to report successful recruitment campaigns for the General Secretary and Secretary for Ministries.
- 3.2 Policies and procedures review.** HR policies for Church House are reviewed at least every two years. HR also provides policy templates and advice to synods and churches when requested.
- 3.3 Line management training.** The HR team delivers line management training for Church House managers and makes those training events available for managers from synods and churches to join. In addition to events at Church House this training has been delivered at Luther King House, Manchester, and at the Synod of Scotland's offices. Training has also been delivered on Recruitment and Performance Development Reviews (Appraisals).
- 3.4 Staff training -** As part of the induction process new staff are allocated a series of online training course which they are required to complete. These vary according to role but cover some essential elements such as health and safety, data security and safeguarding. HR reviews systematically all Performance Development Review (PDR) forms to pick up identified training needs in order to determine the best way of meeting those needs.
- 3.5 Job evaluation system.** The HR team has started a systematic review of job evaluations using the new system. Alastair Forsyth, a member of the HRAG who has particular experience in this area has supported the HR staff to ensure the evaluation tool is being used effectively. The less straightforward work of aligning the evaluations with pay scales has commenced and this is being done in conjunction with the remuneration committee.
- 3.6 Risk Matrix.** The HRAG acted as a pilot area for the revised process and is in the process of updating its own register in line with the new process.
- 3.7 Human resources information system.** Following some slight technical difficulties the first stage of employee self service was rolled out in June. This allows employees to see their own data, amend selected details and book holidays on line. Additional functionality will be rolled out over the coming months.
- 3.8 Lower ground floor building work** The HRAG was pleased to see staff who had been displaced while remedial refurbishment works were carried out in Church House returning to their normal office spaces in May 2019.

Paper O2

Tenure of the Principal of Westminster College

Human resources advisory group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Geoff Shaw, Convenor geoffshaw2810@sky.com Jane Baird, Secretary jane.baird@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council confirms that appointments to the role of Principal of Westminster College are for an initial period of seven years with the possibility of that appointment being renewed for successive periods of up to five years.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To confirm that the appointment to the role of Principal, Westminster College is renewable.
Main points	The existing position is unclear.
Previous relevant documents	Paper U2 Mission Council November 2018 Paper O2 Mission Council May 2019.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Governors, Westminster College Education and learning committee The Clerk The General Secretary.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

1. Until 2007 the role of Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, was an additional responsibility for a member of Westminster College Senatus.
2. In 2007 a new and separate role of Principal was created.
3. Since that date two Individuals have occupied the role of Principal; neither wished to continue in the role at the end of their first term of office. The question as to whether the term is renewable has never been tested.

4. During the recruitment process for a new Principal the question was posed but no definitive answer was available.
5. Ministers of word and sacraments appointed to membership of Westminster College Senatus are appointed for an initial period of seven years which is renewable for successive periods.
6. As until 2007 the Principal was engaged on the same terms as all the members of Senatus, it is the belief of HRAG that since the creation of the new role in 2007 the Principal's role should be renewable in the same way.
7. This paper seeks to confirm that belief.

Paper O3

Extension of term of service of the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

Human resources advisory group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Geoff Shaw, Convenor geoffshaw2810@sky.com Jane Baird, Secretary jane.baird@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, extends the appointment of the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar as Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries until 31 August 2022.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To extend the appointment of the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar in the role of Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries for a further two years.
Main points	Dr Jagessar's appointment as Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries is due to end on 31 August 2020. Both Dr Jagessar and the mission committee wish to renew the appointment for a period of two years.
Previous relevant documents	Paper I2 Mission Council November 2015 Paper O2 Mission Council May 2019.
Consultation has taken place with...	Deputy General Secretary (mission).

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Continuity for existing relationships with partners.

1. The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar was appointed as Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries (RJMM) from 1 September 2008. The appointment was for an initial term of five years, with the possibility of an extension for another five, subject to review before the end of this period.
2. In 2015, following the resignation of the Secretary for World Church Relations and the combining of the World Church Relations and RJMM posts into a new post of Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, Michael was appointed for a further five years, until 31 August 2020.
3. Dr Jagessar requested that his current term of service be extended by an extra two years to enable him to retire in August 2022. This was discussed at the mission committee meeting on 7 to 8 February 2019.
4. The mission committee recommended that the extension be given for the following reasons:
 - a. the post had recently been reshaped, as had that of the Programme Officer, and both posts need some time to develop and bed in. It would benefit the work if there were continuity and the current Secretary were given an extra two years to be involved in shaping the two roles
 - b. the work of Global and Intercultural Ministries is developing and expanding, especially now that Commitment for Life has become part of it, and there is therefore a continuing and clear need for the post
 - c. given the need for the post, budget provision will continue to be made for it
 - d. it would extend Michael's tenure up to his anticipated retirement date.
5. In May 2019 Mission Council (Paper O2) passed the resolution: '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.' That resolution made it clear that a further renewal is possible.
6. Human resources advisory group considered the renewal of Dr Jagessar's appointment at its meeting in March 2019 and now brings a recommendation to Mission Council.

Paper R1

Supporting adult survivors of abuse Safeguarding advisory group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ioannis Athanasiou safeguarding@urc.org.uk
Action required	For decision.
Draft resolution(s)	On behalf of the Church, Mission Council thanks survivors for their courage in sharing their thoughts and recommendations and instructs SAG: a) to oversee and support the work of the survivors' group b) to integrate their recommendations in the delivery of URC's Safeguarding Strategic Plan (2020-2025), and c) to review and advise the whole Church through Mission Council/General Assembly on how to continue fostering this sensitive area of pastoral care and support for adult survivors of abuse at the URC.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To draw attention to the needs of those who have experienced abuse and their suggestions as to how they might best be helped.
Main points	Consultation with survivors and pastors highlights the valuable help they can offer in improving understanding and responses to survivors across the denomination.
Previous relevant documents	Learning Group Report, November 2018 Paper R2 at Mission Council, May 2019.
Consultation has taken place with...	Survivors group drawn from the URC The Methodists Church The Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Summary of impact

Financial	A sum of £5,000 has already been added to the 2020 budget to support consultation work with survivors at Assembly level. Further funds will be needed in the future to incorporate their involvement in all developments related to safeguarding, as the PCR learning group recommended to the Church.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Continued consultation with partner Churches will help to share good practice, as will support from specialist external agencies

Background

1. The Past Case Review (May 2015 to June 2017) concluded its work with the publication of a major and independently-authored report in October 2018. This report captured the learning generated through the two phases of the PCR and offered key recommendations and areas of improvement on safeguarding in the URC. Two recommendations referred to the need to instigate direct work with adult survivors of abuse and consultation with survivors and relevant organisations about ways to improve safeguarding in the URC.
2. Based on these recommendations of the Past Case Review Learning Report, there has been progress in respect of these recommendations. The Safeguarding Adviser of the denomination invited adult survivors of abuse and persons holding a pastoral role or position within the URC to attend consultation meetings. The intention of this contact with survivors of abuse was to listen to them and value their opinions in improving our ways of responding to those adults who have experienced abuse. Three meetings have taken place at Church House since November 2018. Three survivors and two more persons from their support network (a pastor/minister and an elder/wife of a survivor) were involved in this process. There was also an input from two synod safeguarding officers who attended some of the meetings, and from pastoral consultants who engaged with the Past Case Review in the capacity of listeners to survivors.
3. Survivors and pastors in these meetings identified the following essential elements in supporting adult survivors of abuse:
 - a) We need to establish a culture at the URC where people feel safe to speak about abuse. Adults survivors of abuse call the Church to accept that when one suffers, the whole body suffers. The scriptural mandate that entitled the participants to attend the meetings was justice and prevention: a personal sense of justice and peace for those who disclose abuse and action to prevent abuse and harm for all in the Church. The Church should recognise that abuse happened and might happen again in any congregation, synod, office, school, property and community of the Church. As disciples of Christ, everyone needs to be ready to act if abuse happens again. We can begin by talking openly about abuse. Being a survivor of abuse is an experience that we can speak about.
 - b) Survivors also mention the need to refer to them as survivors (not victims of abuse) as well as to use currently available resources of the URC (GP4's model policy and poster publicly displayed with clear information about how to access help) to produce new theological resources, prayers, leaflets, brochures and campaigns, to supply new material to local churches and to make people aware of the issues surrounding safeguarding adults.

Survivors recommend as a priority the production of a URC prompt card specifying procedures for reporting abuse. This can be done by drawing on learning from other denominations' experiences (such as Methodist Church's leaflet "Do not fear"). Bible conversations about this subject also need to offer questions rather than pushing people into a corner. The overarching aim should be to allow people space to wrestle with God within the Church without forcing any local church or other body of the Church to use particular liturgies or resources.

- c) The meetings with survivors and pastors recognised that child protection arrangements are more established in the Church but that safeguarding of adults requires further work. The proposed specific improvements in current safeguarding structures of the Church include embedding in our ethos the Christian duty of standing by survivors, making disclosure and grievance procedures more accessible to the wider public (such as by the use of section Q in the URC Manual) and introducing a denominational whistleblowing policy. It is the survivors' recommendation that the URC needs a policy which addresses wider whistleblowing concerns and issues of power that arise when people use and mis-use the existing structures of the Church. A whistleblowing policy would enable complainants to make statements that are taken seriously and responded to appropriately.
- d) The Church needs to be better at listening and have people ready to listen. The Church has found it difficult to listen when experiences of abuse are disclosed, and anger is expressed. Survivors from several research groups¹ point out that they do not need great experts to listen to them; just another human being who listens at their pace, does not push them too hard and recognise that abuse is not their whole story. They want people who can trust the survivor to be the expert in their own life and offer them the chance to say no to help and withdraw their involvement if it is difficult for them and their needs change over time. The views of survivors of this consultation resonate with the principle of empowerment that underpins adult safeguarding work: people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent (2013 Statement of Government Policy on Safeguarding Adults).²

Our conversations with survivors and pastors in the URC highlighted the importance of listening skills and the value of human connection with people who are well informed about what trauma and sexual abuse. Adult survivors of abuse also mentioned that disclosures and conversations should not happen online, as people can become more vulnerable. The web can be used for initial signposting, and people can then make personal contact and have safe conversations in face-to-face interactions based on the principles of confidentiality and integrity. We need an unbiased support system imbedded within the life of the URC that seeks resolutions and access to right support.

- e) As a church, we need to be aware of cases that don't "fit" some definitions and to be flexible in the way we offer support over time. It is important to cater for people's different care and support needs and respond to them in ways that are appropriate for them, recognizing that not everyone copes in the same way. Each experience is unique and personal, depending on the age at which the abuse happened, the relationship to abuser, the frequency, severity and duration of abuse, the response to first disclosure. It is re-traumatising for people to experience situations where their story is not believed or where the expression of anger is not allowed. Both the underlying power in the abusive relationship and the pain need to be acknowledged and healed.

¹ Dale, P., *Adults Abused as Children: Experiences of Counselling and Psychotherapy*; NSPCC, East Sussex and Kent

² Good Practice 4 *Handbook for Churches*: p.82

- f) Pastoral support offered at the local church is paramount. As survivors of abuse pointed out, it is not easy to disclose and share, but it is important that there is pastoral care available as well as access to this support when they speak out. Pastoral care is one of the responsibilities of the elders' meeting, which is exercised jointly by the ministers and elders of the church. Ministers and elders need to relate with compassion and kindness within appropriate boundaries and to take slow steps, before they raise people's expectations and cause damage by being unable to deliver what might be promised as a church.

Similarly, pastoral support is vital when disclosures take place in another part and body of the church, including synods, Church House and associated groups of the United Reformed Church. Abuse can happen in all parts of the Church. This means that training of people and readiness to respond are vital elements to support those who experience abuse, wherever in the URC this disclosure happens. A compassionate and unbiased response to the survivor is required of everyone and particularly those in positions of power and leadership (church leaders, ministers and elders) acting with the individual in the journey of accessing pastoral care and support.

- g) When survivors experience childhood abuse by their parents/carers, attention is important within family and community groups and activities of the Church as well as in events around the time of Mother's Day/ Father's Day. Alarming evidence shows that sexual abuse happens within the family environment, with high proportions of males among those who perpetuate abuse. People have sometimes experienced abuse for years before reaching a point of disclosure. The University of Suffolk and the charity Survivors in Transition have published research looking at the impact of delayed disclosure and access to services and support for those who experienced sexual abuse in their childhood (2018).³ Findings from in-depth interviews with 28 adult survivors of child sexual abuse show an average time span from the start of abuse to disclosure of 27.5 years. Survivors in this research reported that delayed disclosure resulted in complex issues related to the abuse, which had a detrimental impact on their mental health; and poor experiences of disclosure had acted as barriers to future support services. Therefore, the point of disclosure is one vital element that can contribute to life changes when responded to with compassion and sensitivity by a minister or an elder or a staff manager who will readily listen to disclosures within private conversations, home visits or other private church services.
- h) Survivors have been concerned to effect positive change and feed into the wider work and ethos of the URC. Although not all elders are specialists in offering pastoral support, and not all churches have ministers, at least either an elder or a minister can be accessed in any URC church. As a result, all ministers, elders and CRCWs of the URC can be appropriately trained to offer support and to follow existing guidance in the safeguarding policy of the Church (good practice four – Adults at Risk Section). Setting up a group for survivors and pastors to develop a course for ministers and elders on supporting adult survivors of abuse shows that the URC is a place of welcome and compassion where survivors and pastors can be given a specific role. The group will join up all the various pockets of the Church to produce and trial a training and resource pack for

³ "I'll be a survivor for the rest of my life: Adult survivors of child sexual abuse and their experience of support services", Research by the University of Suffolk.

ministers, elders and CRCWs in the next year. Support from external organisations (such as NAPAC/ National Association for People Abused in Childhood) has been already explored and sought, to give us direction.

i) The group will also work to help the Church take a standpoint about spiritual abuse. One survivor gave an example of abuse within Church where power was mis-used in trying to bully someone and using his or her vows to impose what was considered appropriate behaviour within the Church. Another example would be the reference to marriage vows in abusive relationships. Spiritual abuse is an increasing issue in society, and it can impact on specific minorities and groups, such as the spiritual abuse experienced in church by people who are not heterosexual. Any prescriptive doctrine that impacts on people's lives (e.g. a concept of forgiveness) can also be experienced as spiritual abuse. Pastors and survivors recognise that the risk of spiritual abuse needs to be acknowledged and urgently addressed more widely in the URC. Although objections are expressed over the term 'spiritual abuse', it resonates with survivors' experiences and describes their understanding of this experience.⁴ It is not limited to one denomination or faith, however, as a recent book suggests,⁵ nor is it bound by theology. Church leaders can also be victims of abuse by the people they are leading. General Assembly should consider adding to the ordination vows of ministers and elders a vow about making the church a safer place for all people. This would offer a way to exercise some monitoring of abuse (not only spiritual) and of inappropriate behaviour.

4. There are several cost implications (cross-committees, lack of a denominational budget, diverse synod structures) to developing this area of pastoral work and running the proposed working group. Supporting those who have experienced abuse and educating those with pastoral responsibilities and power to prevent abuse within the Church require some additional funding in the future. For this reason, the Safeguarding Advisory Group needs to keep this concern under review and to advise the whole church through Mission Council/General Assembly on how to oversee and foster this sensitive area of pastoral care and support for adult survivors of abuse.
5. The above elements for change in current safeguarding and pastoral care practices and procedures of the URC are going to require a co-production process with survivors and pastors of the URC. Safeguarding is about people and local churches working together to prevent and reduce both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect. No intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster recovery – no matter how much it appears to be in his or her own best interest⁶.

⁴ Oakley, L. and Humphreys, J., 2019. *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse: Creating Healthy Christian Cultures*. SPCK.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Herman, J. L. (1997) *Trauma and Recovery: the aftermath of violence* New York: BasicBooks

Paper R2

URC's Safeguarding strategic plan 2020 to 2025

Safeguarding advisory group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ioannis Athanasiou safeguarding@urc.org.uk Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Having already accepted the recommendations of the Past Case Review Learning Group Report, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, endorses the URC's safeguarding strategic plan as the next step of the journey. Mission Council directs the safeguarding advisory group: (a) to oversee the development, implementation, review and monitoring of the plan (b) to advise Mission Council/General Assembly on progress at subsequent meetings.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The Past Case Review indicated the need for the Church to undertake systemic changes. This strategy with its six clear objectives aims to effect cultural change and improvements in the safeguarding policies, practices and procedures of the Church over the next five years.
Main points	Detailed revision of the Safeguarding strategic plan. Financial proposal to help implement the plan. Responses to two public inquiries. Publication of Good Practice five - <i>Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk</i> .
Previous relevant documents	Paper R2 at Mission Council, May 2019. Paper R2 at Mission Council, November 2018.
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of the SAG. URC General Secretary. Synod Moderators, Synod Safeguarding Officers, Synod Clerks and CYDOs

Summary of impact

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

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Responding to the instruction given by Mission Council in May 2019, the Safeguarding advisory group reviewed all the PCR Learning Report's recommendations and consulted with synods, finally producing a comprehensive strategic safeguarding plan for the Church to take effect from 2020 to 2025. The plan sets up priorities and six strategic 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.
- 1.2 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 ethos, shared responsibilities 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. In Scotland, elements of the URC strategy will be delivered in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures of the Church of Scotland due to the specific Scots law. For instance, safer recruitment and disciplinary processes are not covered in the current safeguarding agreement with the Church of Scotland.

2. Updates on actions since last Mission Council

- 2.1 In the midst of reviewing the plan (July 2019), the URC was granted core participant status for IICSA's investigation into child protection in religious

organisations and settings in England and Wales. This investigation is thematic and focuses upon organisational structures and child protection practices, looking at whether there are common issues across religious organisations and settings and how these can be met and overcome. The investigation covers religious settings such as mosques, synagogues, churches and temples; places of faith tuition; and youth groups and camps. It does not examine individual case studies or non-religious youth provision which may be situated in a religious setting: for example, where outside organisations hire church premises.

- 2.2 The inquiry received 33 applications for core participant status and the chair has designated 20 individuals and organisations as core participants to this investigation. The determination of the URC as a core participant is made on the basis that the URC has played a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the Inquiry relates through our recent Past Case Review. As a result, we will play a formal role within the investigation set up by the Government and assist the Inquiry by providing information and offering insight into matters relating to child sexual abuse and protection both within this denomination and in religious organisations and settings more widely. We have already submitted a witness statement to account for the policies and procedures the Church follows to protect children from sexual abuse. The hearing for this (in which the Church's Legal Adviser will be involved) will be held between 16 and 27 March 2020.
- 2.3 The Church has also received a request from and submitted evidence to the APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group on Safeguarding in Faith Settings) Inquiry into 'Positions of Trust'. Endorsed by Sarah Champion MP and Michael Tomlinson MP, this second inquiry of the APPG plans to publish a report discussing whether the definition of 'Position of Trust' in the Sexual Offences Act, 2003 needs to be changed. The concern is to ensure that faith settings are sufficiently within the scope of legislation to allow young people to be properly protected. The evidence sessions will be held at the Houses of Parliament on 22 October.
- 2.4 The next edition of URC's safeguarding policy - *Good Practice 5: Safeguarding for Children and Adults at Risk* will be ready in January 2020 to reflect new laws and regulatory requirements. All relevant people and groups were informed about the consultation timeframes to ensure that all wisdom and expertise across the denomination will contribute to this development. Thanks to a dedicated Safeguarding Policy Review Group, the whole Church will access for first time a common safeguarding policy that will be compact, user-friendly and easily accessible to local churches, synods, institutions and bodies of the Church. The handbook for local churches will no longer be in use. *Good Practice 5: Safeguarding for Children and Adults at Risk* will be the only safeguarding policy and guidance document for all parts of the church and 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.

- 2.5 We continue to develop a framework of safeguarding training across the URC to ensure a standardised approach to training and development for those engaged with children and adults at risk in our Church. Following recommendations in the Past Case Review (PCR) Learning report, safeguarding training in the URC must ensure that everyone working in URC affiliated churches, groups, offices and institutions understands the safeguarding processes and policies of the URC, and is appropriately equipped in addressing child abuse and harm in all forms. In alignment with Good Practice four, Safeguarding training – Practice Guidance for the URC has been under development with the support of the Safeguarding training review group. Further work is required to have a fully-fledged guidance tailored to the internal culture of the URC. The Safeguarding Training – Practice Guidance will be brought for consideration to Mission Council in March 2020. We plan that this safeguarding training will align with and be recognised by other denominations for effective ecumenical recognition and partnership.
- 2.6 SAG is liaising with MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group) in the process to review the current ministerial disciplinary process (Section O). Our focus is on seeking a joined-up and consistent approach to address the present disconnection between safeguarding and discipline. One of the main recommendations given to the URC by the PCR learning group suggests that a new disciplinary process to be developed should prioritise safeguarding.

3. Moving towards a five-year strategy

- 3.1 Making 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. They have varied starting points – in funds, in volunteer strength and in patterns of paid staffing. Further consultation with synods in recent months has enabled us to finalise the plan and consider the differing resource implications available to implement the plan in each synod. We have already visited eleven synods and have looked at the budget for 2020 and projections for 2021-22 provided by the Chief Finance Officer. SAG consulted carefully with each synod and with the finance committee.
- 3.2 It was agreed therefore that a Safeguarding Programme Officer be employed to work (4 days a week) with the denominational Safeguarding Adviser, to help synods to implement the plan over the next three years. Such a post would cost approximately 32K per year, and the postholder need not be London based. It is further suggested that a post of part time Safeguarding Administrative Assistant be created, working three days a week. This would cost around 15K per year. In addition to these staff appointments, a sum of £120,000 pounds be made available over the next three years to offer additional assistance to synods for administrative/legal help as may be required to deliver the strategy effectively in the years to 2025. Additionally, a sum of £5,000 has already been added to the 2020 budget to support consultation work with survivors led by the safeguarding

office at Church House, and a previously agreed sum of £3,000 put forward for training and professional development for synod safeguarding officers and coordinators who will support the strategic plan.

- 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. Finally, in year five the Safeguarding advisory group (SAG) will review progress against its published objectives and will undertake planning and consultation to develop a new strategic plan for 2025 onwards. The Safeguarding advisory group will be responsible and accountable for overseeing the priorities and activities in the plan, approving additional funding requests from synods 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 available resources and existing safeguarding practices and they will have access to Assembly-level support.
- 3.4 The SAG advises each part of the Church to review and establish potential risks and identify remedial actions in the journey of effecting cultural change in the safeguarding policies, practices and procedures of the Church over the next five years. The Charity Commission requires trustees to manage risk and protect the reputation and assets of the charity. It is also important for all elders' meetings, synod councils, relevant committees, reference and advisory groups to integrate safeguarding risk management processes in the delivery of the plan considering all available resources, needs, geographies and unique conditions of each local church, synod, office and body of the United Reformed Church.

GLOSSARY

CC Charity Commission	DDC Due Diligence Check Ltd	PVG Protecting Vulnerable Groups (Scotland Scheme)
CFS Churches Forum for Safeguarding	GP4 Good Practice 4	SAG Safeguarding Advisory Group
CH Church House	GP5 Good Practice 5	S/G Safeguarding
CRCW Church-related Community Workers	LEP Local Ecumenical Partnership	SSO Synod Safeguarding Officer
CSC Church Safeguarding Coordinator	LADO Local Authority Designated Officer	GA General Assembly
CYDO Children's and Youth Development Officer	MC Mission Council	GP Good Practice
DBS Disclosure and Barring Service	MIND Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group)	URC The United Reformed Church

Outline of six strategic objectives: charting the way forward

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and 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 have safeguarding designated persons committed to protecting children and adults who are or might be at risk of experience abuse or neglect	All URC churches have at least 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	CSC Data/Admin staff Elders Pastoral Committees	Not enough and able volunteers to undertake the role – One CSC can be shared across a pastorate or group of local churches A transparent approach to local safeguarding arrangements is valued in practice Good examples of active safeguarding coordinators, elders and volunteers be acknowledged
	1.2. Contact details of safeguarding designated persons are added and updated on church posters and noticeboards, URC databases, Year Book and Synod Directories and websites	Details of designated safeguarding professionals (Church Safeguarding Coordinators/ Synod Safeguarding Officers) are public and easily accessible to raise safeguarding concerns or other general enquiries throughout the Church	Numbers of churches providing this data on church returns Number of posters displayed	On time of annual returns (normally January)	Church Secretaries CSC Admin staff SSOs S/G Adviser Publications staff	GDPR principles considered and applied The risk of low rate in church returns. Using one return form and requesting data only once a year from the churches Correlate data of synod safeguarding returns and church annual returns to inform and regularly update a centralised database

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
1. Instill a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.	1.3 Raise awareness of child protection and safeguarding adults at risk with guidance, resources and material within the worship, care and life of the URC	Keep every minister, children's and family worker, youth worker, elder, staff member and volunteer regularly updated and well supported to place safeguarding at the heart of church life	Materials downloaded from websites, distributed and used More requests for training made by churches Training intake from children/youth workers, SSO and CSC	Ongoing	SSOs CSCs S/G Adviser Comms team Assembly and Synod staff and leaders Church Ministers and Elders	Constant changes in public policy and legislation The use of the website, new technologies, video clips, social media, newsletters and free resource packs to disseminate new knowledge and examples of promoting good practice Churches with no electronic systems are recorded and supported accordingly Pay attention to identifying and defining spiritual abuse at the URC. A working group to look at the contested nature and theological implications of this form of abuse for the benefit of the whole denomination
	1.4 Develop shared awareness of safeguarding, and what counts as a safeguarding concern across the denomination in alignment with legislation and internal ethos	Build on common understanding of protection and safeguarding among leaders, ministers, frontline staff, elders and other volunteers and encourage teamwork and collaboration in dealing with safeguarding incidents and concerns	Training material and resources produced & accessed Working groups crossing boundaries between different departments and roles within the URC	June 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs	A culture of deference and inaction to be alarmed of and discouraged A URC-standardised basic safeguarding training that reflects the needs of our Church The opportunity of updating GP4 and recognise it as the only safeguarding policy and guidance document for the whole church The vital role of keeping up with the regular meetings of SSOs

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
1. Instill a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.	1.5. Improve safeguarding communications between Church House, synods, local churches 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 Use of URC recording form is standardised and increased	January 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs	Recording and Sharing Information principles are clear and standardised in all parts of the Church Three national meetings with all SSOs annually Periodic 121 conversations of SSO with SA Synod meetings and networks of local churches Relevant events, training courses and conferences are shared within the Church
2. Ensure initial and appropriate pastoral care and support to those who are 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 from the time of disclosure.	This allows individuals who disclose abuse or neglect to feel they are listened to and that the Church is ready to meet their pastoral care and support needs and/or signpost them to appropriate specialist services or other sources of support	Positive feedback and evaluation by survivors Reduced number of complaints and reports Increased number of referrals to external specialist support	January 2021	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs Active Ministers Elders Synod Pastoral Committees	Not enough people at the church or synod to provide pastoral support Access to local help and/or local services to be identified and offered The ongoing impact of abuse on survivors. Avoid re-traumatisation of processes, which compounds the original abuse. Standardised training established for those with pastoral care responsibilities within URC

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
2. Ensure appropriate and ongoing pastoral care and support to those who are impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns	2.2. Co-produce with synods an appropriate case management system that provides prompt and proportionate support to those children, young people and adults in greatest need	This helps assess and prevent safeguarding risks with pastoral care needs established as early as possible and followed up	<p>Number of individual cases</p> <p>Number of occasions that pastoral support was offered</p> <p>Number of cases that pastoral care and support has taken</p> <p>Number of referrals to external support</p>	July 2021	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>CSCs</p> <p>Synod and CH admin staff</p>	<p>Not sharing the same understanding of what counts as a case – Definitions be provided in GP5 and internal protocols</p> <p>Access for all synods and Church House's relevant staff to a centralised recording system of allegations and cases of abuse, harm and neglect</p> <p>Expectations and challenges of managing workload</p> <p>Need for extra specialist support and supervision for those who handle serious cases</p>
	2.3. Consult and engage with survivors and relevant groups and organisations	This ensures that the URC co-produces with survivors, develops and adopts appropriate approaches to supporting survivors and preventing abuse	<p>Number of consultations and reviews with survivors and relevant groups</p> <p>New services of care and support</p>	Ongoing	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>SAG</p>	<p>Budget implications</p> <p>Ethical considerations - Principles of confidentiality and integrity are paramount</p> <p>Voices are heard in meaningful and non-tokenistic ways in all future developments</p> <p>Learn from/work with other denominations, organisations and specialist agencies (e.g. NAPAC)</p>
	2.4 Use internal or external specialists to support local congregations affected by serious incidents of abuse	A whole-congregation approach will enable local church communities to recover from trauma	Lessons drawn and impacted on local safeguarding practice	Ongoing	Elders Active Ministers SSOs	Capacity problems – The vital role of leadership and collaboration (including GA appointed officers and interim moderators)

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
2. Ensure appropriate and ongoing pastoral care and support to those who are impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns		and crisis in a supportive environment for all	Sharing good stories of church community work in the area of safeguarding		Synod moderators	High risk of stigma and conflicts to those affected by serious safeguarding situations Principles of informed consents, confidentiality and transparency to be applied. The interrelated work of pastoral committees and LEPs.
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 to resolution	This protects the rights of individuals and relationships across the URC and ensures individual cases, and ministerial and case files are integrated, monitored and securely stored in one unified system	All synods access the system Adoption of <i>Appendix A8: Reporting concerns form</i> across the URC Number of resolved cases Positive reviews from those who access the system	June 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs Ministries office IT and admin staff	No clear lines of accountability and duties to record and report. Guidelines in alignment with Sharing Information Policies and Legislation Not all synods accessing the main database. Added costs for new systems and/or training to be considered at early stages of delivery Disintegration of data in different parts of the church. Protocols are developed, applied and reviewed Access and permissions to appropriate staff are granted Synod of Scotland's different arrangements

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and 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 standard reporting forms and procedures on a regular and annual basis	This helps those with safeguarding leadership responsibilities keep an oversight of practice and share information with councils, committees and groups of the Church	Protocols established, used and reviewed Number of reports produced and shared	June 2022	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs Members of relevant committees and groups	People not aware of lines of accountability Roles and Job Descriptions with clear reference to responsibilities and duties to report and share information Standardising GP5 as the main safeguarding policy and practice guidance across the URC New policies (whistleblowing, bullying/harassment, lone working) are developed and applied across the URC (by SAG, HRAG or CHMG) Cross-over with HR and Comms / Reputation management
	3.3. Each URC synod provides safeguarding data and information annually in a consistent format	Consistency of what information is required as well as regular reports and reviews of internal safeguarding policy and practice will help monitor and review changes	Evidence of review and changes on policy and practice Use of standardised forms across synods and churches	Each May in all years	Church Secretaries CSCs SSOs	Heavy workloads Risk of not meeting deadlines Provide adequate planning time for those who collate information and produce the annual S/G report for SAG and the whole church
	3.4 Co-produce with synods minimum standards of compliance	This will embed a culture of co-design on the journey of	Synod positive feedback of co-production	Each May in all years	S/G Adviser SSOs	Access to appropriate systems Avoid a hierarchical model

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
3. Set up secure and appropriate systems and processes of data and information handling and reporting Safeguarding	with legislation and internal procedures and obtain benchmark progress for each synod	improving URC's safeguarding practices in open and transparent ways			Chairs of relevant committees and groups	Provide clear guidance on what is compulsory in the the review of GP4 and production of GP5 Working closely with synods
	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 local church and identify systemic barriers across the denomination	Standardised and consistent use of audit tools Periodic independent reviews and audits	April 2024	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs Elders	Fear of an independent oversight at the denomination, synods and local churches Building trust and collaboration 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 (annually for each local church)	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	January 2020 January 2022 January 2024	S/G Adviser SSOs	Meeting the needs for the whole denomination Consultation with all parts of the church to identify policy areas that require improvements Resources (writing group, publications, etc) Update and brief people to use GP5
	4.2 Review current safer recruitment practice of the URC and develop a Good Practice Guidance for all parts of the Church	Provide specific and clear advice that ensures appropriate recruitment, induction and retention of trustees,	New guidance's intake Reduced number of inquiries to CH,	October 2021	S/G Adviser SSOs Ministries Office	Over-checking criminal records of people affiliated with the URC Create guidance that helps people clarify when it is not

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
4. Ensure the safeguarding policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and implemented in practice throughout the URC		and of paid and voluntary workers (ii) arranges lawful criminal record checks (DBS/PVG) for all who need this.	Synods and DDC Positive feedback in undertaking checks through DDC Satisfaction survey		DBS Verifiers DDC staff	appropriate to check, and which roles are eligible for criminal record checks Understanding checks as part of a wider recruitment process Scotland's different policy requires separate guidance
	4.3 Develop the capacity of safeguarding designated persons to conduct thorough safeguarding risk assessments and support offenders, alleged offenders and perpetrators of abuse across the URC	Protect against abuse and better support those who are accountable to manage risk and monitor anyone who may pose a risk	Tools and resources produced and used Number of safeguarding contracts/agreements Number of DBS/PVG referrals Publications and resources intake	March 2021	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs Elders	Interpersonal relationships can minimise the importance of risk assessment in the life of the church Equip people with the right skills and specific guidance Regular reviews of existing risk assessment tools and relevant sections of GP4/GP5 (Risk assessment and covenants of care forms and templates)
	4.4 Connect safeguarding policy and procedures with URC's disciplinary processes, especially those related to ministers/CRCWs	This helps establish good practice and expertise among all members of mandated groups and those involved in safeguarding cases that lead to instigation of	Evidence of joint thinking and consultation in the review process of Section O Setting up disciplinary processes for	June 2020	S/G Adviser MIND Ministries Office SSOs	Information sharing protocols with other denominations Disconnection between safeguarding and disciplinary processes A clear and transparent process is jointly agreed and reviewed Mandatory safeguarding training for members of mandated group involved in the Section O process

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
4. Ensure the safeguarding policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and implemented in practice throughout the URC		disciplinary procedures	other relevant roles within the Church Number of safeguarding cases recorded in the disciplinary processes			Defined role for safeguarding officers and advisers in the new disciplinary process Adherence to GP4/GP5 requirements and legislation (e.g. Employment Law)
	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 of employed staff and shared within teams or working groups	Communication material shared Policy updates added on agendas S/G advanced training uptake is increased	January 2020 & Ongoing	S/G Adviser SSOs	Challenges in information sharing (language, terminologies, technical issues). Use of newsletters, briefs and reports to MC/GA to inform the right people The central role of elders, ministers, synod moderators and General secretaries in understanding safeguarding and being aware of URC's policy and practice
5. Provide appropriate + accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for + working with children, young people and adults	5.1. Benchmark and co-produce with synods URC's standardised safeguarding training programme for all roles and positions within the URC expected to undertake regular and mandatory safeguarding training	Align with current synod practices and public policy requirements to enable all those working with children and adults at risk as well as those responsible for their care undertake regular safeguarding training	Training used consistently in each synod A system to monitor attendance and renewals is established and standardised	June 2021	S/G Adviser Education and Learning staff SSOs Synod Training officers	Lack of consistency across synods Recording attendance and renewal of URC or other denominations' training Resistance to travel to attend training. On-line access can help but limits interaction and collaboration. Accessibility needs.

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults					CSCs	<p>Accrediting URC safeguarding training</p> <p>Defining training packages tailored to specific roles and positions (e.g. Elders->SSO)</p> <p>Adaptation to national contexts of Scotland and Wales</p>
	5.2. Ensure robust guidance on delivering 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	<p>Numerical evidence of training attendance</p> <p>Evidence of positive action taken as a result of training</p> <p>Number of certificates per role</p>	December 2020	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SAG</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>Ministries</p>	<p>Non-attendance for those who are involved in direct work with children and adults at risk</p> <p>A framework of sanctions for non-attendance</p> <p>Mandatory safeguarding training for active ministers</p> <p>GA Certificates</p>
	5.3. Develop and maintain quality standards of regular safeguarding training and professional development across the URC	Consistency and quality at different levels of development and delivery of safeguarding training are reviewed regularly	<p>Positive evaluations and reviews of training provision</p>	June 2021	<p>SAG</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>Ministries</p>	<p>Connection with accreditation</p> <p>Working with Learning Resource Centres</p>
	5.4 Develop and update a comprehensive guidance and package of support resources to make serving elders and trustees (URC and	The aim is that elders/trustees feel confident in preventing abuse for all people in the church as well as	<p>Number of interactions/meetings of designated safeguarding</p>	June 2023 & ongoing	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>Education and</p>	<p>Data on elders are not recorded at CH or synods</p> <p>High number of elders – Cost and GDPR implications</p>

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults	synod) aware of their legal responsibilities	protecting the assets and reputation of churches	<p>persons with elders</p> <p>Feedback from elders meeting</p> <p>Numbers of elders attending basic safeguarding training</p> <p>Evaluation of training provision</p> <p>Referrals to CC</p>		Learning Committee	<p>Enabling regular interactions and briefings in Elders or Trustees</p> <p>Meetings to minimise concerns and build trust</p> <p>Working closely with other departments/teams within the URC</p> <p>Keep elders up to date regarding changes to regulations and policies using traditional and visual methodologies (induction material, Reform, video, etc</p>
	5.5 Value the expertise of and contribute to continuous development of Synod Safeguarding Officers	Ensure synod designated persons are equipped and remain resourceful to lead all aspects of safeguarding practice in their local churches with continuous support and supervision	<p>Numbers of co-working groups and surveys with SSOs</p> <p>Records of attending relevant training and professional development opportunities</p> <p>Positive appraisals and feedback from SSOs</p>	Ongoing	<p>SSOs</p> <p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>Line managers of SSOs</p> <p>Synod Moderators</p> <p>Relevant synod committees and groups</p>	<p>Heavy workloads and increased commitments</p> <p>Common understanding of safeguarding between SSOs to be fostered</p> <p>Joint posts with CYDO roles to be reviewed</p> <p>Adaptations to national contexts (Wales/Scotland)</p>

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults.	5.6 Ensure safeguarding is part of the induction of any newly appointed persons to URC roles (particularly trustees, children's and youth workers and those in regulated activities with adults) alongside the specific role induction	This enables 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 CSCs Active Ministers Pastoral Committees Training Officers	Oversee essential requirements set up by Government guidance or CC HR teams to update existing recruitment and induction policies Update safer recruitment guidance for those who recruit, induct and line-manage workers and volunteers
6. Encourage and build constructive partnerships with statutory, non-statutory bodies, other denomination and faith-based communities	6.1 Produce guidance about when churches should call and report to statutory authorities with the support and advice from synods 6.2 Improve public awareness of URC's good practice in safeguarding across denominational, cross-denominational and ecumenical settings	This will allow more confidence to people in the setting up of information sharing protocols and sending referrals for cases crossing statutory thresholds to statutory agencies without delay Encourage personal drive and actions of URC people (particularly volunteers) to improve the safeguarding ethos at the local church and public	Download of on-line resource Number of referrals to Police, Social Services, CC and LADO Increased number of local initiatives and campaigns Opportunities to share expertise externally	March 2022 March 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs Synods S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs SAG	Safe and secure systems of information sharing between different parts of the church Meet legislative requirements (GP5 - GP6 in three years' time) Learn from other denominations, e.g. CoE's recent guidance on reporting and sharing information Initiatives and events Links with other developments 'Walking the way safely' Links with Methodists, Baptists and Anglicans

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider implications
6. Encourage and build constructive partnerships with statutory, non-statutory bodies, other denomination and faith-based communities	6.3 Develop and share guidance on safeguarding when churches hire out their premises or providing space to groups/organisations whose work involves children	<p>acknowledgement of personal commitment and collective efforts</p> <p>Promote good practice in allowing our premises to be used by external organisations working with children and adults at risk and prevent safeguarding issues from occurring</p>	Increased use of the guidance	June 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs	<p>Serious incidents not reported to CC</p> <p>Clear safeguarding arrangements and agreements</p>
	6.4 Endorse close partnership and knowledge exchange of best practice with other denominations to support LEP's and church communities	<p>Promote ecumenical dialogue and co-produce partnerships for the benefit of public worship, protection of the vulnerable and pastoral care of communities</p>	<p>Publication of material & resources</p> <p>Number of joint events and seminars</p>	Ongoing	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs CFS Local ecumenical groups	<p>Shared resources and common events</p> <p>Ecumenical and international settings</p>



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