



Section B: The Structure of the United Reformed Church

- 1.(1)(a) Members of the United Reformed Church associated in a locality for worship witness and service shall together comprise a Local Church. Since the proper functioning of the Local Church is so fundamental to the life of the United Reformed Church, where there is a number of small congregations in proximity to one another unable separately to provide leadership and resources for the work of the church, such congregations shall consult with the synod to formulate an acceptable scheme for joining together with a single membership, a common Church Meeting and elders' meeting, representative of all the constituent congregations, and a shared ministry.
- 1.(1)(b) Where two or more Local Churches together, and in consultation with the synod, decide that their mission will be more effective if they share resources and ordained ministry, they may, with the approval of the synod, form an association known as a group of churches with a structured relationship and a constitution governing the way in which they relate to one another as to the sharing of both resources and the ordained ministry. Each church within the group shall retain its own identity, and its Church Meeting and elders' meeting shall continue to exercise all their functions in relation to that church, save that, so long as the constitution shall so declare, decisions relating to the calling of a minister (see paragraph 2(1)(vii)) may be taken by a single group Church Meeting at which all the members of each of the constituent churches in the group shall be eligible to attend and vote.
- 1.(1)(c) Where two or more Local Churches together, and in consultation with the synod, decide that their mission will be more effective if they share ordained ministry (but not other resources), they may, with the approval of the synod, form an association known as a joint pastorate, with a structured relationship with respect to the provision of ordained ministry only and a statement of intent governing the way in which they relate to one another in relation to the sharing of ordained ministry. Each church within the joint pastorate shall retain its own identity, and its Church Meeting and elders' meeting shall continue to exercise all their functions in relation to that church, save that, so long as the statement of intent shall so declare, decisions relating to the calling of a minister (see paragraph 2(1)(vii)) may be taken by a single joint pastorate Church Meeting at which all the members of each of the constituent churches in the joint pastorate shall be eligible to attend and vote.
- 1.(2)(a) The United Reformed Church in England shall be divided into provinces, each having a synod. In Wales and in Scotland, in recognition of the different status of these nations

there shall in each case be a single synod to be known as a National Synod. The expression 'Provincial Synod' when used in the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972 and 1981 shall in relation to property in Wales be read as referring to the National Synod of Wales. Each synod shall consist of a single District Council as hereinafter defined plus such areas of ecumenical cooperation as the synod shall determine. Each area of ecumenical cooperation shall comprise the geographical area from time to time assigned to it by the General Assembly or by the synod.

- 1.(2)(b) Throughout this statement of the Structure of the United Reformed Church references to 'Provincial Moderators' shall be read as meaning 'Moderators of synods' in respect of Scotland and Wales.
- 1.(3) The oversight of the United Reformed Church shall be the concern both of the Local Church and wider representative councils. The councils of the United Reformed Church shall be:
- (a) the Church Meeting and the elders' meeting of each Local Church;
 - (b) the council of each District to be known as a District Council and of each area of ecumenical cooperation to be known as an area meeting;
 - (c) the synod of province or nation to be known as a Provincial or National Synod; and
 - (d) the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

These four parts of the structure of the United Reformed Church shall have such consultative, legislative and executive functions as are hereinafter respectively assigned to each of them and each shall be recognised by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned.

- 1.(4) Unless otherwise expressly stated or clearly excluded by the context, the expressions 'minister', 'ministers', 'ministry' and 'ministerial' when used in the Structure shall refer to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.

The composition and functions of the Councils of the United Reformed Church

Church Meeting

- 2.(1) The Church Meeting of the Local Church shall consist of those persons who have been admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the United Reformed Church and whose names are included on the membership roll of such Local Church. The Church Meeting may invite other persons who regularly worship with the Local Church but whose names are not on the membership roll to attend and speak at

its meetings on particular occasions but no such person shall have the right to vote. In the Church Meeting which shall meet at least once a quarter and at which the minister or one of the ministers shall normally preside, the members have opportunity through discussion, responsible decision and care for one another, to strengthen each other's faith and to foster the life, work and mission of the Church.

Functions:

Concerning the outgoing of the Church:

- (i) to further the Church's mission in the locality;
- (ii) to develop local ecumenical relationships;
- (iii) to further the Church's compassionate ministry in the locality and throughout the world;
- (iv) to consider and support the wider work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (v) to consider public questions in relation to the Christian faith;
- (vi) to bring concerns for consideration by the elders' meeting and wider councils of the church.

Concerning the nurture of the fellowship:

- (vii) to call a minister or church related community worker (CRCW) with the concurrence of the synod(s) (see paragraph 2 (4) (A)(vii)); (Where two or more Local Churches have formed a group or joint pastorate in accordance with paragraph 1(1)(b) or (c) above on the decision of synod under its function 2(4)(A)(iii), the Church Meetings of each church may, with the agreement of the synod and so long as the group constitution or the statement of intent as appropriate shall so provide, join together as a group or joint pastorate Church Meeting for the purpose of calling a minister or CRCW, in which case this function shall be exercised by the group or joint pastorate Church Meeting.);
- (viii) to elect elders and officers, determining their number and period of service, and representatives to wider councils;
- (ix) to admit and transfer members, to maintain standards of membership, and to suspend or remove names from the membership roll, always on advice from the elders' meeting;
- (x) to consider, always on advice from the elders' meeting, any application for recognition as a candidate for the ministry or for service as a CRCW and to transmit it, if approved, to the synod;
- (xi) to adopt financial reports;
- (xii) to receive reports and proposals from the elders' meeting, District Council, synod and General Assembly and to authorise appropriate action;
- (xiii) on the recommendation of the elders' meeting to make or provide for the making of arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings and the general oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the Local Church.

And generally:

- (xiv) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the Church.

Elders' meeting

2.(2) The elders' meeting of the Local Church shall consist of the minister(s) and the elders elected by the Church Meeting of such Local Church and shall exercise oversight of the spiritual life of the Local Church. The elders' meeting shall serve the Local Church and by its relation to the wider councils of the United Reformed Church represent the whole Church to the Local Church. The minister, or one of the ministers, or during a pastoral vacancy the Interim Moderator appointed as hereinafter provided, shall normally preside over the elders' meeting.

Functions:

- (i) to foster in the congregation concern for witness and service to the community, evangelism at home and abroad, Christian education, ecumenical action, local inter-church relations and the wider responsibilities of the whole Church;
- (ii) to see that public worship is regularly offered and the sacraments are duly administered, and generally to promote the welfare of the congregation;
- (iii) to ensure pastoral care of the congregation, in which the minister is joined by elders having particular responsibility for groups of members;
- (iv) to nominate from among its members a Church secretary (or secretaries), to be elected by the Church Meeting, to serve both the Church Meeting and the elders' meeting;
- (v) to arrange for pulpit supply in a vacancy;
- (vi) to keep the roll of members (see paragraph 2 (1)) and (as an aid to the discharge of the congregation's pastoral and evangelistic responsibility) lists of names of adherents and children attached to the congregation, and in consultation with the Church Meeting to maintain standards of membership and to advise on the admission of members on profession of faith and by transfer, on the suspension of members, and on the removal of names from the roll;
- (vii) to be responsible for the institution and oversight of work among children and young people and of all organisations within the congregation;
- (viii) to call for the election of elders and advise on the number required;
- (ix) to consider the suitability of any applicant for recognition as a candidate for the ministry or for service as a CRCW and to advise the Church Meeting about its recommendation to the synod;
- (x) to recommend to the Church Meeting arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings and the general oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the Local Church;
- (xi) to act on behalf of the Church Meeting and bring concerns to the wider councils of the United Reformed Church;
- (xii) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the Church.

District Council

2.(3) The District Council shall consist of:

- (a) The Moderator of the synod for the time being;

- (b) A president appointed by the synod, who shall perform the functions defined as applicable to the chairman in the United Reformed Church Acts 1972, 1981 and 2000;
- (c) A secretary appointed by the synod;
- (d) Such number of representatives of Local Churches within the District as the synod shall direct;
- (e) Up to six co-opted ministers or members of Local Churches, normally elders, as the synod shall direct.

The District Council shall meet at least once a year, unless the secretary notifies the members in writing that there is no business for the council to transact.

Functions:

The District Council is responsible for exercising the following functions:

- (i) those matters which are the responsibility of the District Council under the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000 (including the Schedules to those Acts);
- (ii) such other matters as may be delegated to it by the General Assembly.

Synod

- 2.(4) The synod being representative of the Local Churches in that province or nation united for the purpose of dealing with matters of wider concern shall consist of:
- (a) All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church related community workers engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within that synod, former Moderators of General Assembly, and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a local church in that synod;
 - (b) All missionaries of the United Reformed Church for the time being on furlough and for the time being resident within the province or nation;
 - (c) Representatives of Local Churches within the province or nation who shall normally be members of the elders' meeting of a Local Church and who shall be appointed by the Church Meeting of such Local Church, the number of such representatives to be normally one. A synod may at its discretion vary the number of representatives of Local Churches so that a Local Church may appoint two representatives. (Where a Local Church, whether a local ecumenical partnership or a Local Church organised according to the second sentence of paragraph 1.(1), comprises two or more congregations worshipping in separate locations, the synod may, on the advice of the District Council, authorise that Local Church to appoint representatives to the synod from each constituent congregation to such numbers as would be permitted by the above rule as if each congregation were a separate Local Church);
 - (d) An elder or retired minister appointed by the synod as an Interim Moderator who shall be a full member of the synod for the period of the appointment;
 - (e) Such members as shall from time to time be appointed by the General Assembly;
 - (f) Such retired ministers who have been appointed by the synod as officers of

- the synod, for the period of their appointment;
- (g) Such members of Local Churches, normally elders, not exceeding 24 (or such other number as the General Assembly may from time to time determine) as may be co-opted by the synod;
 - (h) Representatives, not exceeding the number approved by the General Assembly, of other denominations as the synod may from time to time determine;
 - (i) Two young people, actively involved and engaged with the United Reformed Church at local, synod, or Assembly level, who have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of the synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;
 - (j) All retired ministers not covered by paragraph 2.(4)(d) or paragraph 2.(4)(f) residing within the province or nation served by the synod, who shall be associate members of the synod having the right to speak but not to vote at meetings of the synod.

The synod shall elect from among its members a Clerk, a Treasurer and such other officers as it shall from time to time think desirable and shall determine their periods of service. It may also appoint such committees and for such purposes as it from time to time may think desirable and may appoint to any such committee any members of the United Reformed Church notwithstanding that they are not members of the synod.

Moderators of synods

There shall be a Moderator for each synod being a minister appointed from time to time by the General Assembly according to its rules of procedure and responsible to the General Assembly.

The Moderator shall:

- be separated from any local pastoral charge,
- stimulate and encourage the work of the United Reformed Church within the province or nation,
- preside over the meetings of the Synod and exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers, CRCWs and churches within the province or nation,
- suggest names of ministers to vacant pastorates, in consultation with Interim Moderators of Local Churches,
- preside, or appoint a deputy to preside, at all ordinations and/or inductions of ministers and all commissionings and/or inductions of CRCWs within the province or nation,
- fulfil the responsibilities ascribed to the Moderator of synod under the disciplinary process and the incapacity procedure.

The Moderators of the synods shall meet together at regular intervals for the better discharge of their duties.

Functions of synods:

- A. The synod is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in paragraph 7.4 below):
- (i) to take action which supports
 - the spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad,
 - the life and witness of the United Reformed Church,
 - the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole,
 - the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed;
 - (ii) to encourage church extension within the province or nation, decide upon the establishment of new causes and the recognition of mission projects;
 - (iii) to decide upon all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of Local Churches;
 - (iv) to take appropriate action on matters referred to it by the General Assembly;
 - (v) to provide a forum for concerns brought forward by Local Churches and to advise thereon;
 - (vi) to make proposals to and raise concerns for consideration by the General Assembly;
 - (vii) to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers or church related community workers and, with the Moderator of the synod or the Moderator's deputy presiding, to conduct, in fellowship with the Local Church, any ordinations and/or inductions of ministers and any commissioning and induction of church related community workers within the synod;
 - (viii) to appoint, in consultation with the Local Church, an Interim Moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such Interim Moderator normally being a serving minister or a retired minister. In exceptional circumstances an elder may be appointed;
 - (ix) to care for all the churches of the synod ensuring that visits are made at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work;
 - (x) to appoint from time to time such number of representatives to the General Assembly (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall determine. This shall include, when possible, at least two representatives aged 26 or under. As far as possible all appointments shall be made in rotation from Local Churches;
 - (xi) to appoint from time to time the president, secretary and members of the District Council or councils within its boundaries;
 - (xii) to appoint to service on synod:
 - (I) United Reformed Church ministers/CRCWs/lay people serving as (a) full-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals and workplaces, where their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the synod concerned, (b) secretaries and other full-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship;
 - (II) United Reformed Church ministers/CRCWs giving significant oversight to Local Churches, under the general direction of the synod concerned;
 - (III) Ministers, CRCWs or members of diaconal orders of other churches appointed to serve on behalf of the United Reformed Church in charge of a United Reformed Church or in an ecumenical group including United Reformed Church interests;
 - (IV) Ministers not in pastoral charge or CRCWs who perform duties within the synod in respect of which the synod has some direct responsibility;

- (xiii) to consider and where appropriate appoint to service on synod United Reformed Church ministers/CRCWs/lay people serving as (a) part-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals and workplaces, where their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the synod concerned, (b) part-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship;
- (xiv) to devise strategies which enable and support the exploration of mission opportunities in the region and to encourage in Local Churches concern for service and a sense of responsibility for the wider work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (xv) to exercise oversight of (i) all Ministers falling within any of the categories 2.(4)(a), (b), (d) and (f) except Moderators of synods who are the responsibility of the General Assembly and (ii) church related community workers;
- (xvi) to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them, if approved, to the Assembly for decision, and, in partnership with the relevant Resource Centre for Learning, to give pastoral care to such candidates during their training;
- (xvii) where the synod, acting through its Moderator (or his/her duly appointed deputy) in accordance with either the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church (where the issues relate to perceived disciplinary breach(es)) or the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual (where the issues relate to perceived incapacity as defined in the Incapacity Procedure), considers that a minister or church related community worker is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E or Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II to the Basis of Union, as the case may be, to take the appropriate one of the following courses namely (i) to refer the case of that minister or church related community worker into the Disciplinary Process in the manner prescribed by that Process and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (reference to be made to Paragraph 7.5 of the Structure to ascertain the point at which a Disciplinary case shall commence) or (ii) to follow the Consultation Procedure prescribed by the Incapacity Procedure which could in its turn lead to the case of the minister or church related community worker being referred into the Incapacity Procedure and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Procedure (reference to be made to paragraph 6.5 of the structure to ascertain the point at which a case shall commence within the Incapacity Procedure) (the transitional overlap which occurs when a case is referred back from the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure leading to the commencement of a case within the other of them shall be a permitted extension of the Function);
- (xviii) to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission following a Hearing under the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a Hearing under the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual appends guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or church

- related community worker from the respective Roll, any such guidance is brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or church related community worker and any others who might in the future be identified as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information;
- (xix) to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals; to accredit and provide support and training for lay preachers and worship leaders and, in consultation with the Local Churches concerned;
 - (xx) to give authority for appropriate lay persons to preside at the sacraments. Authorisation for lay persons to preside at the sacraments in ecumenical areas shall only be given after consultation with the appropriate ecumenical partner;
 - (xxi) to consider the resignation of ministers or church related community workers not currently the subject of any case within the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O and in consultation with the Moderator of the synod to decide upon appropriate action;
 - (xxii)
 - a) to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and
 - b) in Scotland and Wales to speak and act on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church in public affairs or the conduct of ecumenical relationships specific to the nation concerned, in the General Assembly's name but without prejudice to the Assembly's right to speak and act in the same field on behalf of the church either in England or throughout Great Britain;
 - (xxiii) to decide upon all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings;
 - (xxiv) to receive, hear and decide upon references and appeals duly submitted;
 - (xxv) to decide upon the recommendation of Local Churches applications for recognition as candidates for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work;
 - (xxvi) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.
 - (B) No appeal shall lie against the decision by a synod to initiate the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O or the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P in respect of any minister or church related community worker under Function (xvii).

Ecumenical United Areas

- 2.(5) The Area Meeting of each Area of Ecumenical Cooperation being representative of the Local Churches in that area grouped together for the purposes of fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight and united action shall consist of representatives of all churches engaged in the area of ecumenical cooperation. The United Reformed Church membership of the area meeting in each area of ecumenical cooperation (hereinafter referred to as the United Reformed Church Committee) shall consist of the Moderator of synod, all ministers, church related community workers and registered pastors (in Scotland) engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within the area, representatives of Local Churches within the area, and such

other persons as determined by the constitution of each area meeting as approved by resolution of the synod.

- (A) The synod shall delegate to the area meeting the following functions (subject to the restriction referred to in paragraph 7.4 below), unless by agreement with the relevant ecumenical partner it is felt that some of these functions should be reserved to the synod, and it shall be the responsibility of the Area Meeting:
- (i) to exercise oversight of all ministers and church related community workers falling within any of the categories 2.(4)(a), (b), (f) and (g) except Moderators of synods who although members of the area meeting are responsible to the General Assembly;
 - (ii) to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers and church related community workers and, with the Moderator of the synod or the Moderator's deputy presiding, to conduct, in fellowship with the Local Church(es), any ordinations and/or inductions of ministers or commissionings and/or inductions of church related community workers within the area of ecumenical cooperation;
 - (iii) to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of non-stipendiary ministers (and church related community workers) to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals;
 - (iv) to appoint, in consultation with the Local Church(es) and the Moderator of the synod, an Interim Moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such Interim Moderator normally being a serving minister or a retired minister. In exceptional circumstances an elder may be appointed;
 - (v) to care for all the churches of the area meeting and to visit them by deputies at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work;
 - (vi) to consider, on the recommendation of Local Churches, applications for recognition as candidates for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them to the synod;
 - (vii) to accredit lay preachers;
 - (viii) to consider resignations of ministers or church related community workers not currently the subject of any case within the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O and in consultation with the Moderator of the synod to decide upon appropriate action (see also Paragraphs 2.(4)(A)(xxi) and 2.(6)(A)(xviii);
 - (ix) from time to time to recommend to synod such number of representatives to the General Assembly as the synod shall determine;
 - (x) to engage in study concerning the Church's mission in the region and to encourage in the Local Churches concern for youth work and social service and a sense of responsibility for the wider work of the Church at home and abroad;
 - (xi) to promote church extension within the area and to submit proposals to the synod for the establishing of new causes and the recognition of mission projects;
 - (xii) to make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the synod in consultation with the Moderator on all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of Local Churches;

- (xiii) to make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the synod on all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings;
 - (xiv) to provide a forum for concerns brought forward by Local Churches and to advise thereon;
 - (xv) to hear and make decisions upon appeals brought forward by Local Churches and church members;
 - (xvi) to take appropriate action on matters referred to the council by the synod or General Assembly, and to initiate or transmit proposals for consideration by those bodies;
 - (xvii) to maintain contact with ecumenical and missionary work in the area;
 - (xviii) to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission following a Hearing under the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a Hearing under the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual appends guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or church related community worker from the respective Roll, any such guidance is brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or church related community worker and any others who might in the future be identified as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information.
- (B) Such functions as relate solely to the work of the United Reformed Church may be discharged by the United Reformed Church committee of each area meeting.

General Assembly

- 2.(6) The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life shall consist of:
- (a) Such number of representatives of synods (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine. These numbers shall be calculated proportionately to the total membership of each synod, as recorded in the year book of the United Reformed Church (at present this calculation shall be such as to produce a total of synod representatives not exceeding 250);
 - (b) Among the representatives of synods shall be included at least two from each synod aged 25 or under, at the date of appointment. These representatives need not be members of the United Reformed Church, but must be actively involved and engaged with the United Reformed Church at local, synod, or Assembly level, who have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of the synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent; should a synod prove unable to make such an appointment it

- may appoint from another synod but these persons must be 25 or under at the date of appointment;
- (c) The Moderators of the General Assembly and of the synods, and such other officers of the General Assembly as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (The Assembly has determined that the Clerk of Assembly and the General Secretary shall be members of Assembly);
 - (d) Where the Moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly, the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative;
 - (e) The convenor of each of the standing committees of the General Assembly;
 - (f) A staff representative and a student representative being members of the United Reformed Church, from each of such theological colleges as the General Assembly has designated as resource centres for learning, and a staff representative and a student representative being members of the United Reformed Church, from such other colleges or centres as shall from time to time be designated by the education and learning committee as engaged in significant training for the United Reformed Church;
 - (g) Such number of representatives from the partner churches of the United Reformed Church outside of Britain and Ireland as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (currently six);
 - (h) Such other ministers, church related community workers and members of the United Reformed Church as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (the Assembly has added to its membership one serving United Reformed Church chaplain to the forces, nominated each year by the Organising Secretary of the United Board, in consultation with the three Principal Chaplains, and six representatives of the Synod of Scotland);
 - (i) The two most immediate past Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church;
 - (j) Two in total from the following: former Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, past chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, past presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, former Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, former chairmen or presidents of the Annual Conference of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, former presidents of the Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, provided that such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that they shall have been elected by a college consisting of all such past and former Moderators, presidents and chairmen as are members of the United Reformed Church;
 - (k) Such number of representatives of United Reformed Church Youth, associated with a young people's group in a local church or United Reformed Church Youth groups at synod or Assembly level, who have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of URC Youth, as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present three);
 - (l) Representatives of other denominations in the United Kingdom as the General Assembly may from time to time determine (currently six);

- (m) A representative of the Council for World Mission;
- (n) Such number of Assembly-appointed staff as the General Assembly may from time to time determine;
- (o) The chair of the United Reformed Church Trust.

The General Assembly shall at its biennial meeting elect one Minister of Word and Sacraments or church related community worker and one elder of the United Reformed Church to serve jointly as Moderators, and such other officers as it shall from time to time think desirable. (The Assembly has appointed the following to serve as officers with the Moderators: the General Secretary, the Clerk of Assembly, the Treasurer and the Convenor of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.) It shall also appoint a Mission Council with power to act in its name between meetings of the General Assembly and to discharge such other functions as the General Assembly may from time to time direct. The General Assembly shall appoint standing committees which subject to the General Assembly shall have charge of the continuing interests of the church. It may also appoint special committees which subject to the General Assembly shall have charge of such matters as the General Assembly may assign to them from time to time. The General Assembly may appoint to any such committee members of the United Reformed Church who are not members of the General Assembly.

Functions:

General Assembly is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph 7.4 below):

- (i) to oversee the total work of the church;
- (ii) to make decisions on reports and recommendations from its own committees, issue such directions and take such actions as it deems conducive to the propagation of the gospel, the welfare of the United Reformed Church, the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed;
- (iii) to conduct and foster the ecumenical relationships of the United Reformed Church;
- (iv) to support and share in the missionary work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (v) to determine the standards and scope of an adequate training for ministers and church related community workers;
- (vi) to make regulations respecting theological colleges belonging to the United Reformed Church, to appoint the Principal, Professors and other members of the teaching staff, and Board of Governors, and to superintend their work;
- (vii) to recognise theological colleges previously recognised by the Congregational Church in England and Wales or the Congregational Union of Scotland and such other colleges in such manner and for such purposes as the General Assembly may determine;
- (viii) to appoint Moderators of synods;
- (ix) to remit questions concerning the witness and judgement of the church for general discussion in Church Meetings, Elders' Meetings, and synods, and to call for reports from these councils;
- (x) to interpret all forms and expressions of the polity practice and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church including the Basis and the Structure and to determine

- when rights of personal conviction are asserted to the injury of the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church;
- (xi) to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xii) to make, alter or rescind rules for the conduct of its own proceedings and of those of other councils and commissions of the United Reformed Church and such other rules, bye-laws and standing orders as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable for the performance of its functions and the carrying into effect of any of the provisions contained in the Basis and the Structure and for the conduct of the business and affairs of the General Assembly and of the other councils and commissions of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xiii) to appoint at its discretion additional members to serve on synods;
 - (xiv) to make such alterations in the boundaries and groupings of Districts and synods and to establish such new Districts and synods as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable;
 - (xv) to consider and decide upon references and appeals duly submitted;
 - (xvi) to make, alter or rescind rules of procedure for the submission and conduct of references and appeals to and by the councils of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xvii) to receive and decide upon applications for admission into the United Reformed Church from ministers, probationers and congregations, transmitted by synods through their moderators;
 - (xviii) to decide upon questions regarding the inclusion on the Roll of Ministers and the Roll of church related community workers of the United Reformed Church which have been previously considered and transmitted with recommendations by synods (but excluding any matter which is dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process referred to in Paragraph 7 of the Structure);
 - (xix) to provide for the raising of funds for the work of the United Reformed Church and to determine arrangements for payment of stipends and expenses to ministers, church related community workers and officers of the United Reformed Church and for such other financial matters as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable;
 - (xx) to consider and decide upon issues and representations duly transmitted by other councils of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xxi) to make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Commission Panel and to any administrative office under the Process for Ministerial Discipline contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Process (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Process are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding);
 - (xxii) to provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church for the hearing of appeals under that Process;
 - (xxiii) in the absence of any reference into either the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church (where the issues relate to perceived disciplinary breach(es)) or the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual (where the issues relate to perceived incapacity as defined in the

Incapacity Procedure) by the appropriate synod (the case of any minister who is the General Secretary or a moderator of synod being necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where the General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) (acting through the General Assembly Representative or his/her duly appointed deputy) considers that a minister or church related community worker is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E or Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II to the Basis of Union, as the case may be, to take the appropriate one of the following courses namely (i) to refer the case of that minister or church related community worker into the Disciplinary Process in the manner prescribed by that Process and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (reference to be made to Paragraph 7.5 of the Structure to ascertain the point at which a Disciplinary case shall commence) or (ii) to follow the Consultation Procedure prescribed by the Incapacity Procedure which could in its turn lead to the case of the minister or church related community worker being referred into the Incapacity Procedure and to act in accordance with the provisions thereof as regards the suspension of the minister or church related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Procedure (reference to be made to Paragraph 6.5 of the Structure to ascertain the point at which a case shall commence within the Incapacity Procedure) (the transitional overlap which occurs when a case is referred back from the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure leading to the commencement of a case within the other of them shall be a permitted extension of the Function);

- (xxiv) to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission following a Hearing under the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a Hearing under the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual appends guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or church related community worker from the respective Roll, any such guidance is brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or church related community worker and any others who might in the future be identified as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information;
- (xxv) to make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Standing Panel and to any administrative office under the Incapacity Procedure (Section P of the Manual of the United Reformed Church) and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Procedure (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Procedure are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding);
- (xxvi) to provide for the setting up of an Appeals Review Commission in accordance with the Incapacity Procedure for the hearing of appeals under that Procedure;
- (xxvii) without detracting from the general delegatory powers held by Mission Council, to give specific authority to Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly to make with immediate effect such changes to any part of the ministerial Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual or the ministerial Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P as are recommended to Mission Council by the MIND Advisory

Group (or such other Group or Committee as may in the future perform the functions of that Group), all such changes to be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly;

- (xxviii) to consider, on the recommendation of synods, applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work, to oversee their training, and to determine their eligibility for a call;
- (xxix) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.

Constitutional Amendments

- 3(1) No exercise of the function of constitutional amendment contained in 2(6)(A)(xi) shall have effect unless the following procedure has been followed:
- (a) The proposal for the amendment shall be made in accordance with the Standing Orders of the General Assembly.
 - (b) Either the General Assembly or, in years when the General Assembly does not meet, the Mission Council shall vote on a motion to approve the proposal which shall require a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass.
 - (c) If such motion to approve the proposal is passed the General Assembly or the Mission Council, as the case may be, shall refer the proposal to synods and may, if it deems appropriate, in exceptional cases also to Local Churches.
 - (d) If the proposal has been agreed by the General Assembly it shall set a final date for responses to be made, which shall normally be at an appropriate time before a meeting of the Mission Council not less than nine months after the meeting of the General Assembly at which the proposal was agreed.
 - (e) If the proposal has been agreed by the Mission Council it shall set a final date for responses to be made which shall normally be at an appropriate date before the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly.
 - (f) If by such date notice has been received by the General Secretary from more than one third of synods (or, if it has been so referred, more than one third of Local Churches) that a motion 'that the proposal be not proceeded with' has been passed by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such body, then the Assembly or the Mission Council, as the case may be, in its concern for the unity of the church shall not proceed to ratify the proposal.
 - (g) If by such date such notice has not been received, a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting or before the Mission Council at a meeting specified by the General Assembly. If such a motion is before the General Assembly it shall require a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass. If the motion is before the Mission Council it shall require a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass. In its concern for mutual understanding within the life of the church, before voting on such a motion the General Assembly or Mission Council shall invite a representative of any synod from

which the General Secretary has duly received notification under 3(1)(e) to present the main reasons for its objection.

- (h) If such a motion is passed by such a majority the amendment shall have effect.
- (l) For the purposes of this paragraph 3(1), only synods and Local Churches in existence on the date set for responses to be made shall be counted in the calculations.

- 3(2) In the case of motions which would have the effect of terminating the separate existence of the United Reformed Church, or of a synod within it, by union with other churches, the voting process to be used shall be not less stringent than in 3 (1) and that process shall be determined by a single vote of the General Assembly which shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting to pass. In the case of a proposed union affecting only Scotland or Wales no action will be taken by the General Assembly until a decision in favour of union has been taken by the relevant synod.

Consultation

4. Decisions on the part of any council shall be reached only after the fullest attempt has been made to discover the mind of the other councils or of Local Churches likely to be affected by the decision.

Appeals

5. The procedure for dealing with references and appeals falling outside paragraph 6 (incapacity procedure) and paragraph 7 (disciplinary process) is as follows:
- 5.1 Any decision of a Church Meeting within an area of ecumenical experiment may be taken by way of appeal to the area meeting. A decision of any other Church Meeting may be taken by way of appeal to the area meeting. A decision of any other Church Meeting may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which the local church concerned is represented. Any decision of an ecumenical area meeting having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part of thereof may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which local churches in the area are represented. Any decision of a synod may be taken by way of appeal to the General Assembly.
- 5.2 A Church Meeting may itself refer any dispute or difference arising within the local church for resolution by the synod. An ecumenical area meeting may refer any dispute or difference arising within the area for resolution by the synod. A synod may refer any dispute or difference arising within the province or nation under its oversight for resolution by the General Assembly.
- 5.3 The synod may declare any decision of a Church Meeting within the province or nation under its oversight, or any decision of an ecumenical area meeting within that province or nation having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part thereof, which is (or has been reached by a procedure) incompatible with the Basis of Union, the Structure of the URC, the constitution of the ecumenical area (where

applicable) or any rule or resolution of Assembly binding on the local church or the ecumenical area to be a nullity. The General Assembly may declare any decision of a synod to be a nullity on analogous grounds. The review of any decision with a view to declaring it a nullity shall be known as constitutional review.

- 5.4 Appeals, references and constitutional review under this paragraph shall be subject to conditions and processes laid down by the Assembly in Rules of Procedure. A wider council determining an appeal or reference may either substitute its own decision for that of the more local council, or remit the issue to the more local council for reconsideration. No procedure governed by this paragraph shall be used to review decisions reached under the ministerial disciplinary process or the incapacity procedure.
- 5.5 The decision of the General Assembly on any matter which has come before it on appeal, reference or constitutional review shall be final and binding.

Incapacity Procedure

- 6.1 The provisions of this Paragraph 6 shall apply to cases proceeding under the Incapacity Procedure (Section P of the Manual of the United Reformed Church) where those responsible for initiating it in respect of any particular minister or church related community worker consider that s/he is not or may not be exercising the ministry of word and sacraments or the ministry of church related community work as the case may be in accordance (in the case of ministers) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E of the Basis of Union and (in the case of CRCWs) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto and perceive the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister or CRCW on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness or (ii) psychological disorder or (iii) addiction.
- 6.2 No right of appeal shall lie against the decision taken in accordance with Paragraph 6.1 above to initiate the Incapacity Procedure in respect of any minister or CRCW.
- 6.3 The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding, and once so initiated that case shall be resolved in accordance with the Incapacity Procedure and not under Paragraph 5 above.
- 6.4 As soon as any minister or CRCW becomes the subject of a case under the Incapacity Procedure, none of the Councils of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister or CRCW in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this paragraph.
- 6.5 A case shall commence within the Incapacity Procedure when the Synod Moderator or the General Assembly Representative shall send or deliver to the secretary of the

Review Commission* a Certificate of Entry* and a Commencement Notice* (the expressions marked * being defined in the Incapacity Procedure).

Disciplinary Process

- 7.1 The Provisions of this Paragraph 7 shall apply to cases proceeding under the Disciplinary Process (Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church) where the person responsible for initiating it in respect of a particular minister or church related community worker considers that s/he is not or may not be exercising the ministry of word and sacrament or the ministry of church related community work as the case may be in accordance (in the case of ministers) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E of the Basis of Union and (in the case of CRCWs) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto and perceives the issue as a disciplinary one not falling within Paragraph 6 above.
- 7.2 No right of appeal shall lie against any decision taken in accordance with Paragraph 7.1 above to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any minister or CRCW, and once so initiated that case shall be resolved in accordance with the Disciplinary Process and not under Paragraph 5 above.
- 7.3 The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Disciplinary Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding.
- 7.4 As soon as any minister or CRCW becomes the subject of a case under the Disciplinary Process, none of the Councils of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister or CRCW in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this paragraph.
- 7.5.1 In any case in which the Caution Stage (as defined in the Disciplinary Process) is invoked, that case shall begin with the calling in of the synod appointees as described in the Disciplinary Process.
- 7.5.2 In any case in which the Caution Stage is not invoked, that case shall begin with the calling in of the Mandated Group as described in the Disciplinary Process.

Person responsible for editing document: *Clerk of the General Assembly*

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