



H: Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee

1. Terms of reference

- (a) The Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee will consider the cases of United Reformed Church ministers which are referred to it because of some perceived pastoral need by Mission Council, synods, committees or synod moderators, and when the continuation of a minister's service in an existing pastoral charge or within the URC is in question.
- (b) The committee will seek to enable the minister's service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate, and to this end may consider financial support for a course of retraining, or therapy, or counselling.
- (c) The committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) in consultation with the minister to make this happen.
- (d) The committee may authorise the maintenance of ministry (MoM) sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend and may authorise the Chief Finance Officer to pay other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge for a specific period. Such period will not exceed six months in the first instance but may be extended by the pastoral reference committee. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry out the functions of the MoM sub-committee) or the Chief Finance Officer will accept this authority for payment.
- (e) In each case the committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and if it may be extended.

2. Limitations on Powers

- (a) The committee does not have the authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have the authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, church meeting and synod pastoral committee or equivalent.

- (b) The committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. Nevertheless, the committee may authorise any financial payments allowed under its terms of reference (see 1d).

3. Confidentiality

It is evident that the work of the pastoral reference and welfare committee will be confidential and pastoral. Nevertheless, it will need to keep a record of its meetings. The committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned and shared with others directly involved in the matter who need to know the outcome. It would be inappropriate for the committee as a body or individual members of it to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

4. Composition

- A former Moderator of General Assembly who shall be the convenor.
- The General Secretary
- Two lay people
- One minister in pastoral charge
- One Synod Moderator
- The Treasurer
- The convenor of the welfare sub-committee
- The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) who will act as secretary

5. Attendance

- (a) The minister whose case is being considered by the committee may request a meeting with the committee in person if he or she so wishes. Alternatively, the committee may invite the minister to meet some or all its members. In either case the minister may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.
- (b) The committee has the discretion to invite other persons involved in a case to meet it.

6. Relationship to Structure

The committee will report to the General Assembly at its biennial meeting. However, the report will only deal with general matters and the committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.

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