



The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
General Secretary: The Revd John Proctor

17th May 2015

To Synod Clerks

Dear Friends,

Report to Synods on matters referred to you for consideration

This letter comes on behalf of the Revd Michael Hopkins, Clerk to the General Assembly, as well as on my behalf. Any responses should be sent to me.

We write to let you know about three sets of matters that were discussed at the URC's Mission Council last weekend. These are now referred to Synods for consideration, because they would involve changes to the Structure of the Church. The procedure for doing this is set out in Section 3(1) of the Structure. You will see that such matters are considered at a central council of the Church, referred to Synods, and then considered again at a central council, where a formal and final decision may be taken. So this is now the middle stage of a three-stage process.

Unless your synod passes a resolution that an item "be not proceeded with", and you notify the General Secretary by the date specified, your synod will have been deemed to agree by default. That means that if you agree with a measure, you do not need to reply. If you disagree with it, it is important that you do reply.

For convenient consideration of these matters, they are set out below on separate pages.

Should you have any questions about the process and formalities of these matters, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With thanks for your help in guiding the life of our Church,
Yours sincerely,

John Proctor

1. Changes to membership of governance bodies

These items were both approved by General Assembly meeting in Cardiff in July 2014:

19B(2) General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by deleting the words “a Committee Convener or otherwise entitled to membership of the Assembly” from Paragraph 2(6)(d).

That sentence would now read:

Where the Moderator of Synod is an Officer of the Assembly the Synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative;

In practical terms, this first resolution means that where a Synod Moderator is a member of General Assembly in more than one capacity, the Synod would now only appoint a substitute if that other capacity is as an Officer of Assembly. This was agreed because the Assembly judged that this was the only conflict of interest that was really sufficient to merit a substitute.

19E (re Paragraph 2(4)(a) of the Structure) General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by adding the words “former Moderators of the General Assembly, and Assembly appointed Ministers who are members of a Local Church in that Synod” to the end of the current sentence.

This sentence would now read:

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 the General Assembly, and Assembly appointed Ministers who are members of a Local Church in that Synod.

This second resolution adds two categories of people to the membership roll of a provincial or national Synod.

*The date for responses to these is **31 December 2015**, which means that these matters must be dealt with at your forthcoming autumn Synod if you wish to consider them.*

*Michael Hopkins, Clerk to the General Assembly
John Proctor, General Secretary
May 2015*

2. Ministerial Candidating Process

This was approved by Mission Council in May 2015:

FUNCTIONS OF SYNODS:

The resolution would change paragraph 2(4)(A)(xvi) of the Structure as follows:

PRESENT VERSION

to give oversight to candidates for the ministries of word and sacrament and church related community work and to candidates for any form of full-time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the above ministries, determine their eligibility for a call;

NEW VERSION

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.

FUNCTIONS OF ECUMENICAL UNITED AREAS:

The resolution would change paragraph 2(5)(A)(vi) of the Structure as follows

PRESENT VERSION

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 synod for decision.

NEW VERSION

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.

FUNCTIONS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

The resolution would introduce a new function [numbering to be determined]:

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.

This resolution, in its various parts, reflects and makes formal a decision taken in 2007. However the necessary change to the Structure was not made at the time, and this rectifies that mistake.

*The date for responses to this item is **31 March 2016**, which means that it may be dealt with either at your autumn 2015 Synod or your spring 2016 Synod if you wish to consider it.*

*Michael Hopkins, Clerk to the General Assembly
John Proctor, General Secretary
May 2015*

3. National Synods

This was approved by Mission Council in May 2015:

FUNCTIONS OF SYNODS:

The resolution would change paragraph 2(4)(A)(xxii) of the Structure as follows:

PRESENT VERSION:

to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly.

NEW VERSION:

(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.

The substance behind this resolution was agreed in the union proposals voted upon at the 1998 General Assembly, and again at the uniting Assembly in April 2000. However, it was not written into the Structure at that time, and this resolution now seeks to do that.

*The date for responses to this item is **31 March 2016**, which means that it may be dealt with either at your autumn 2015 Synod or your spring 2016 Synod if you wish to consider it.*

*Michael Hopkins, Clerk to the General Assembly
John Proctor, General Secretary
May 2015*