Agenda and Timetable

The General Assembly has agreed that every agenda should be headed with the question, what are the ecumenical implications of this agenda?

Friday 22 November 2013

			PAPER/S
[illegible]	[illegible]		
[illegible]	[illegible]		
1.00 – 2.00pm	*Lunch*		
2.00pm	*Room keys available*		
[illegible]	Session 1		
	Worship and Bible study		
	[illegible]		
	[illegible]		
	[illegible]		
	[illegible]		
	interest was appropriately mitigated."		
	[illegible]		

Saturday 23 November 2013

			PAPER/S
8.15 – 9.15am	*Breakfast*		
[illegible]	Session 4		
	Prayers		
	[illegible]		M5
	[illegible]		O2
	[illegible]		X2
11.00 – 11.30am	*Co ee*		
[illegible]	Session 5		
	[illegible]		W1
	[illegible]		X1
	[illegible]		
1.00 – 2.00pm	*Lunch*		

Sunday 24 November 2013			
			PAPER/S
8.15 – 9.15am	*Breakfast*		
	Session 9		
11.00 – 11.30am	*Co ee*		
	Session 10		
1.00 – 2.00pm	*Lunch*		
	Departures		

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

GROUPS

Paper C

Update on the Yearbook 2014

Communications & Editorial Committee

Paper C

Communications & Editorial Committee: Update on the Yearbook 2014

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd John Humphreys jhumphreys@urcscotland.org.uk
Action required	None – for information
Draft resolution(s)	n/a
Alternative options to consider, if any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the United Reformed Church Yearbook 2014
Main points	The October meeting of communications & editorial reversed the previous decision to cancel the print version of the Yearbook. Printed versions will be o ered in 2014 & 2015. The online Yearbook project is near completion and will be available by the end of 2013. A full consultation about the future of the printed Yearbook is planned at some point in the next 18 months.
Previous relevant documents	None
Consultation has taken place with...	The communications and editorial committee, Church House sta working in the communications and ministries departments. Also feedback from people across the Church who received notice that the printed Yearbook was to be discontinued.

Summary of Impact

Financial	In previous years the Yearbook has made a small pro t, thus we are not expecting a negative nancial impact to ow from this decision.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Update on the United Reformed Church Yearbook 2014

Some, but not all, members of Mission Council will have heard that a decision had been taken to cancel the 2014 (and all subsequent) print versions of the Yearbook and move to an online version only. When this decision was discussed at the communication & editorial committee meeting on 9 October 2013, it was reversed. There will be a print copy of the 2014 Yearbook.

Reversing the decision at such a late stage of the year means that we are not able to produce the 2014 Year Book in time for January 2014. Those involved in the production of the 2014 Yearbook have now met and agreed a production schedule – and we are all working to produce the Yearbook by Easter.

At the time of writing order forms were being prepared and a mail out was being planned. A verbal update can be given during Mission Council if necessary.

Work on stage one of the online version is near completion and will be available before the end of this year. As soon as we have a con rmed launch date for that we will let you know.

The committee decision was to commit to a printed Year Book for 2014 (delivered by Easter 2014) and 2015 (to be delivered in January 2015). No decisions were made beyond that but at some point in the next 18 months (dates and details to be con rmed) we will run a full consultation across the denomination asking for comments and feedback on both the online Year Book and the printed version. The results of this consultation will be reported to Mission Council and Mission Council will be asked to decide whether or not we continue with a printed Year Book for 2016 and beyond. Celebrated Lives, the book of obituaries, will be included in the 2014 and 2015 hard copy Yearbook.

The communications and editorial committee is to undertake a thorough review of the work undertaken in the department and the management of that work and is grateful for Gill Nichol's willingness to be the interim director for at least a 10 month period.

Paper D

Education & Learning Committee: Safer Sacred Space

Basic Information

EM3 Mandatory Learning

Safer Sacred Space (safe sexual boundaries)

1.1 Introduction: Mandatory Training

1.1.1 At General Assembly 2012, the United Reformed Church agreed the resolution:

1.1.2 "General Assembly accepts that it will sometimes be appropriate to make certain additional training mandatory under our EM3 provisions for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers. It will be for Mission Council to agree the nature, expected outcomes, and monitoring of such training." (General Assembly Book of Reports 2012 p 250)

1.1.3 All Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) serving in URC pastorates or other recognised posts in the URC shall be required to undertake whatever EM3 Mandatory Training has been agreed by Mission Council.

1.1.4 "EM1" is initial training prior to the ordination of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and commissioning of CRCWs. "EM2" refers to training give in the rst years of ministry. "EM3" refers to continuing education for experienced ministers/CRCWs.

1.2 Introduction: Safer Sacred Space background and training

1.2.1 The Sexual Ethics Steering Group (SESG) was formed in January 2006 with a remit to oversee the implementation of recommendations passed by Mission Council and published in Preserving the Integrity of the Body: Sexual Ethics within the United Reformed Church (May 2006). In August 2007, the nal meeting of the All-Synods Group for Declaration of a Safe Church was held. The initial meeting of Sexual Ethics Advisory Group (SEAG) was held in June 2008 with the remit "to oversee all the

2.1.3 Understand safe sexual boundaries in order that, where in uence is possible, best

3.3 Existing training available to EM3 Ministers

3.3.1 URC Safer Sacred Space Training modules
3.3.2 Safe Space Training created by other denominations and faith groups
3.3.3 Other safe sexual boundary training which meet the URC requirements

3.4 Recommended training delivery methods and materials

3.4.1 Module One Pastoral Boundaries from the training programme Creating Safer Sacred Space for Pastoral Encounter, commissioned by the URC from the face2face project, Holy Rood House, is recommended.
3.4.2 Other training delivery and modules which meet URC requirements may be used.

3.5 Preferred Trainers

- URC Training and Development O cers
- URC Resource Centres for Learning
- Accredited non-URC Providers

3.6 Learning Structure areas

3.6.1 Course length should be substantial enough to deliver content in a meaningful way to optimise EM3 engagements.
3.6.2 Courses should be interactive with the provision of support if sensitive issues arise. It is not recommended that course delivery is by distance or e-learning.
3.6.3

4.2 E ectiveness of Learning will be seen by

4.2.1 Initial Feedback, re ection and evaluation with the course provider

4.2.2 Follow up re ection and evaluation at intervals throughout ministry, especially at refre

Paper E1

United Reformed Church Policy in relation to the Equality Act 2010

Equal Opportunities Committee

Alternatively, “Widening the Eye of the Needle” (see below) provides guidance and a checklist of such an audit which could be used by suitably knowledgeable members of the congregation, perhaps with the advice of a relevant professional.

What happens when we need to make physical changes to the church building?

The normal Synod procedures relating to building alterations still apply.

What if the church is a listed building?

The Equality Act does not override other legislation. You will still have to comply with planning or Ecclesiastical Exemption procedure (Ø661) as well as United Reformed Church procedures.

Access Appraisal

Access appraisal requires an audit process and the following may be consulted:

- Widening the Eye of the Needle: Access to Church Buildings for People with Disabilities John Penton: publication by the Church Buildings Council available from Church House Publishing, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ priced £16.99 (01603 785 923 for orders)
- Helpful documents and lea ets on approaches to considering access for disabled people and on audits and training from Through the Roof (PO Box 353, Epsom KT18 5WS Tel: 01372 749955) http://www.throughtheroof.org
- The Diocese of London has useful guidance and a model access audit form at www.london.anglican.org/DACInDepthAdvice
- The Diocese of Chichester has a guidance document (Getting to Grips with Disability) and an Access Appraisal guide at www.chichester.anglican.org/disability
- Accessibility and Disabled People http://www.churchcare.co.uk/images/access_and_disabled_people.pdf

More detailed advice on the audit process and a church’s responsibilities under the Act is available in an advice note produced by the Church Buildings Council (formerly the CCC)) and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE): Advisory Note 5 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Taking Account of its Implications for the Fabric of Churches and Cathedrals (2003)

General advice on disability issues is available on the Government’s information website Directgov at: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm

A booklet, Easy Access to Historic Buildings can be downloaded from: www.english-heritage.org.uk or www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

RNIB Cymru
Trident Court
East Moors Road
Cardi
CF24 5TD
Tel: 029 2045 0440
Fax: 029 2044 9550
Email: cymruevents@rnib.org.uk

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT (DDA) CAPITAL FUNDING (Welsh Government)
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/circulars/FEFCL0413?lang=en

Changes to the Disability Discrimination Act – Equality Act 2010
http://www.disabilitywales.org/1168/2290

Disability Wales,
Bridge House, Caerphilly Business Park,
Van Road,
Caerphilly CF83 3GW
Tel: 029 20887325
1>0)5n <<7)55 545

Making everyone welcome

For many years it has been unacceptable in practice and in law for anyone to be deterred from entering our buildings and participating in church life as a result of a lack of adequate facilities where they could reasonably be provided. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 had implications for churches in terms of internal and external adaptation of buildings but also wider implications in rethinking the way we carry out our activities. These provisions have been extended in this new Act.

Disability is de ned as “a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse e ect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. The Act protects anyone who has or has had a disability, or who is associated with a disabled person, or who is mistakenly perceived as being disabled.

Think broadly, do not make assumptions, and consider those with less obvious disabilities. It is not just the obviously disabled such as the elderly, the ambulant disabled with their walking frame, or the wheelchair users but also those who have poor strength or dexterity; have learning di culties; have impaired vision or impaired hearing or who have an illness which gives rise to a disability or is likely to do so; and people who have a temporary disability.

In addition to those directly and obviously included in the legislation, churches should be aware that a di culty in accessing certain facilities or services may also be experienced by people such as heavily pregnant women; those particularly large or small in stature (including children); parents or others in charge of small children; or those emotionally distressed or unstable.

Churches should think in terms of the concept of risk as people interact with their environment. The challenge is to assess and respond to that risk so that we may meet, as fully as possible, the needs of people as they really are and not as they might wish to be or as we might wish them to be.

Why does it a ect the church?

In relation to people with disabilities the general principle is that individuals or service providers must not treat disabled people less favourably than they would treat other people, for a reason related to their disability, when o ering or providing access to goods, facilities or services.

It makes no di erence that the services provided by a church are free of charge, churches are service providers. We should recognise ourselves as such and make every e ort to make our activities and buildings accessible to all.

What are our responsibilities?

The new Equality Act sets out three core responsibilities or requirements in relation to those with disabilities;

The rst requirement is that, where the way that things are done puts a person with disabilities at a substantial disadvantage to people who are not disabled, then reasonable

steps should be taken to avoid the disadvantage. In other words, this is about how things are done or how information is supplied. This might include such things as large print hymn books and notice sheets, people available to help someone from a car or into or around a building, and so on.

The second requirement is that, where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to people who are not disabled, then reasonable steps must be taken to remove, alter or ensure users can avoid it. This might include such

be published and displayed by the church and handed out with acknowledgments of church bookings or lets by outside organisations and wedding or baptism bookings, etc. so that people know what to expect when they arrive at church. In this way people know what the situation and provision is in advance and should not have unwelcome surprises.

Useful People and Places to Contact

ENABLE Scotland
Leading the way in learning disability: Tel: 0300 0200 101; www.enable.org.uk

Churches for All
Telephone: 0118 9516971; makeadi erence@churchesforall.org.uk

The Baptist Union Initiative for People with Learning Di culties (BUILD)
David Buckingham, Secretary, 37, Sandon Avenue, Newcastle under Lyme, Sta s ST5 3QB
buildtogether@northern.org.uk

Disability Discrimination Information
www.directgov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm

The other Protected Characteristics deserve some mention here and are covered by the Equal Opportunities Policy of the United Reformed Church

B GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Where a person proposes, has started or has completed a process to change his or her sex.

C PREGNANCY & MATERNITY

Discrimination because of a woman's current or previous pregnancy.

D RACE

Race

- x Colour
- x Nationality
- x Ethnic or National Origins

E RELIGION or BELIEF

- x Religion means any religion
- x Belief means any religious or philosophical belief
- x A reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion, and
- x A reference to belief includes a lack of belief

F SEX

Males and Females (Gender)

G SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- x Persons of the same sex
- x Persons of the opposite sex
- x Persons of the same and of the opposite sex

H AGE

Appendix A

United Reformed Church Equal Opportunities Policy (updated May 2011)

Introduction

Appendix B
Equal Opportunities and Diversity Guidance

An Equal Opportunities Policy: What does this mean and what are its implications for the United Reformed Church?

Such a policy a ects the United Reformed Church as a whole as we strive to celebrate and implement God's all-encompassing love. His justice demands that we do this inclusively and equally with all people in Christ, regardless of human distinctions.

It must be remembered that there is the potential for discrimination to occur in every aspect of the life of the Church, whether in the construction of buildings, the delivery of the service and services, employment of individuals and running of projects, to name a few.

This guidance is intended to provide a greater understanding of how an equal opportunities and diversity policy works, the issues involved, general considerations and where to nd further help and advice if required. It is important that if in doubt the law as a whole is considered and appropriate advice obtained.

What does Equal Opportunities mean?

This is about treating everybody equally and providing the same opportunity to all, irrespective of their gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, race/ colour, age, marital status or disability.

Discrimination explained

In a nutshell, discrimination is the actual behaviour towards members of another group. It involves treating one particular group of people less favourably than others because of their race, gender, age, etc.

Types of discrimination

This occurs in a number of ways: direct, indirect, perceptive and associative. When considering whether discrimination is present, remember that what may be considered to be well-established, tried and tested procedures should also be questioned.

Direct : This is where one person is deliberately treated less favourably than another, the reason being because of their sexual orientation, race, disability, etc., e.g. there are two people with equal quali cations who are both equally capable of performing a job/ task, the job/ task is given to the man and not the woman, solely because of her sex.

Indirect : Such discrimination often occurs as an unintended consequence. It occurs where the e ects of certain requirements, conditions or practices have a disproportionately adverse impact on one group/ individual as opposed to another, e.g. a post is advertised and it is speci ed that only mature applicants need apply. Such an advert constitutes age discrimination against younger applicants.

Perceptive : This is where discrimination occurs against someone because the discriminator thinks the person is of a particular racial group or sexual orientation, etc., even if they are not.

Associative : This type of discrimination can occur against someone because they have an association with someone who is of a particular sexual orientation or racial group, etc.

What if we believe that there is a particular need for a speci c type of person? In a situation where a particular post or project speci cally requires a particular type of person in relation to any of the 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 (this Act harmonises previous discrimination law – e.g. the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, etc.) and seeks to strengthen the law to support progress in equality. These protected characteristics are: age, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex or race. It needs to be demonstrated that there is an 'occupational requirement (OR) which is crucial to the post, then the law can recognize this as an exception to the general position in relation to discrimination, e.g. a woman is required to work with women who have been subjected to physical/ sexual abuse. It is also possible in some situations to discriminate in relation to age if there is a good 'business' reason for doing so, e.g. a task may require speci c experience and quali cations which a younger person would not have. In the case of religion/ belief this need is also referred to as an 'occupational requirement' (OR). (See ANNEX C)

Diversity

This is the taking into account and encompassing the values, attitudes, cultural experiences and di erences of individuals in order not only for them to be included within the operations of an organisation but also to enrich the operation and values of that organisation by the knowledge and experience that is brought by all and also to encourage open-mindedness, exibility and respect for all.

Discrimination in relation to people with a disability

The Equality Act 2010 provides that the Church should take reasonable steps to alter or remove features of their premises which make it impossible or unreasonably di cult for a person with disabilities to make use of the facilities that the Church provides.

The Church is therefore under a duty to:

i)

ANNEX A

Examples of particular disabilities or impairments and issues for consideration

Matter for consideration	Issues
Employment Advertisement	(i) worded so as to avoid potential discrimination (ii) if there is a GOQ, can this be justi ed before being speci ed?

Mobility continued	

Car Park	(i) No hazards or obstructions to visually impaired people (ii) The surface should be smooth and level (iii) Parking spaces f-4(s f6)-5.3(l)-5.03.2787 cm 0 0 .2787 cm 0 0 .2787 cm 0 0 .2

ANNEX B

Access/General Audit Assessment

Draft can be amended to suit particular needs

Matter under consideration	Hazards	Who might be harmed and how	Steps to reasonably remove hazard	Further action necessary	Action Plan

Sources of further information

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (formerly the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality)

Glasgow: The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DU
Telephone 0141 228 5910; Fax 0141 228 5912
scotland@equalityhumanrights.com

Churches for All
Telephone 0118 9516971
makeadi erence@churchesforall.org.uk

The Baptist Union Initiative for people with Learning Di culties (BUILD)
David Buckingham, Secretary, 37, Sandon Avenue, Newcastle under Lyme, Sta s, ST5 3QB
buildtogether@northern.org.uk

Department for Work and P.1(t28(n)-1.53e.8407 5T8407 S)11.11sTc 1(t28(nJ ET EMC /SJ)14C4n1(g)0842

Paper E2

Change of name

Equal Opportunities Committee

Change of name: Equalities Committee

The United Reformed Church has a rmed its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It recognizes that exclusion and discrimination can occur on many grounds, including those recognised in law: gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability. (Mission Council 2008)

However, the expectation that given equality of opportunity those who have been discriminated against in the past will no longer be discriminated against, has turned out not to be true. Discrimination is much more deep seated in our society, in our church and in ourselves. We discovered the reality of this at our last Mission Council when we realized how unbalanced were the URC Trustees as a group. I don't know how long it will take us to right the balance of our Trustees, but even when we have done that, the task will not be nished because unless we keep working on it, we will lose the balance again. Opportunity is not enough. Another example is research into the position of women in science which shows how inbuilt is our discrimination. 127 faculty members from Yale University, both women and men, were given an identical completed application form and asked to rank the candidate in terms of competence, starting salary, their willingness to mentor and likeability. The only di erence on the forms was that half were identi ed as from John and the other half from Jennifer. John was o ered more money and more respect than Jennifer, but Jennifer was more likeable. (Guardian 15.01.13) Opportunity is a beginning but more is needed.

The remit of Equal Opportunities Committee includes:

1. reminding the United Reformed Church that equality is enshrined in its theology, life and work,
2. the development of detailed policies and the monitoring of their implementation,
3. the promotion of training programmes in equality and diversity and
4. the encouragement of the United Reformed Church's contribution to equality in the wider life of our society.

(Mission Council March 2012)

So if we don't want an Equal Opportunities Committee, what do we want? The Methodists have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Church of England have Equality and Diversity Issues. We decided that we would prefer to go for something much simpler.

We would therefore like to change the title of the Equal Opportunities Committee to the

Paper E3

Equal Opportunities Committee:

4. What di erence does it make to you if the language used for God in worship is the same as the language you use for yourself?

5. What are the consequences for men?

6. What di erence does it make to you if the language used for God in worship is never the same as the language you use for yourself?

7. What are the consequences for women?

8. What is your experience of expansive language in worship?

9. What do you feel when exclusive language is used?

What does inclusiveness mean for people with disabilities?
Professor John Hull, who is blind, has said that he found John 9.2,3 – Jesus healing a blind man very di cult. "Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents? Jesus answered, neither..., he is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him." John Hull asks, 'is there a God who will receive me in my blindness? Where is the God who will take me just as I am?'

The Bible does not always treat people with disabilities equally.

10. What should we do to enable people with disabilities to know that God takes them just as they are?

11. What does your local church do to ensure that everyone feels welcomed and included in worship?

12. What should the United Reformed Church do?

Paper F1

Future of the Church

Faith and Order Committee

Paper F1

Faith and Order Committee: Future of the Church

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Welch, convener of the Faith & Order Committee (FAOC) minister@theroundchapel.org.uk
Action required	Discernment by Mission Council with regard to where the Spirit is leading the United Reformed Church in terms of our particular gifts
Draft resolution(s)	No
Alternative options to consider, if any	No

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	'Will these bones live?' This paper outlines issues with regard to the characteristics and identity of the United Reformed Church, in order to continue the discussion from the May 2013 Mission Council about the future of the church and of the United Reformed Church
Main points	Focus on the areas that were identi ed in the Mission Council discussion about which United Reformed Church people are passionate and which URC people value about the URC, rather than the larger number of issues about which people were critical, on the grounds that the renewal of the church arises out of God's generosity and the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Raises issues and questions that need more focussed attention in order to consider the way forward, particularly with regard to URC identity, URC passions and values, where the Holy Spirit is already discerned, the longer strands of history that shape the URC and the call to ecumenism. Questions are o ered for discussion. A section on the nature of the church from the Basis of Union is appended.
Previous relevant documents	Several FAOC discussion papers on the future of the church, a summary of which came to the May Mission Council
Consultation has taken place with...	The Faith and Order Committee, across several meetings; interested individuals, through social media and wider consultation; and the May 2013 Mission Council

Summary of Impact

Financial	If the URC discovered more con dently God's purpose for this church, perhaps she might discover more of God's generous o1T.1(d)2.9(')51.9(s

What we value about the United Reformed Church

The freedom to decide, the freedom to worship and freedom of conscience, each one tested against authority of scripture and Church Meeting; the decision making processes; a vision for governance based on Elders and Church Meeting; the URC enshrines meetings which are empowered to discern the working of the Holy Spirit, even against a majority view; Informality and lack of 'respect' (di erence); The way we related to the word of God in the Bible; our commitment to social justice; our willingness to die as a denomination; inclusivity and tolerance; the Eldership; lively, imaginative local churches; Allowing individuals to express faith commitment (bottom-up); Local church decides who members are; Children and young people equal partners; Holy Spirit is working through all/any; Discernment re call of minister; exibility – try it and see, liturgical exibility too; the sovereignty of God (can we nd our way of saying 'God gave me this word'?), Does our worship re ect the joy that should ow from that awareness? Sharing of gifts a URC characteristic – M&M and resource sharing more than political! (and need to work on how we o er and receive gifts in a range of ways)

History

Are we su ciently attentive to the history of the United Reformed Church, that history as it arises out of the sources of our faith, in the scriptures and the early church, from the Reformation and the 17th century in England, and from the strands of the church which have formed the United Reformed Church? Are we a church that lives in the present rather than builds on the past – but does this lead to a loss of con dence in our faith and our church as we lose touch with our roots? An argument was made for the desirability of a greater familiarity with the founding United Reformed Church statements with regard to our faith and the church in the Basis of Union. (see excerpt in Appendix A)

Discovering the Holy Spirit

There were a range of comments about where people experienced the Holy Spirit, individually and collectively, including: in our shared discernment: when we come together: listening to one another, prayer, moving into grace; when a person is at peace with him or her self; awareness of learning and growth; in times when inspired and excited; there at the edges of experience; when people are ready to be courageous; in being disturbed, in openness; in excitement and caution

> Many moments of revelation were identi ed: Hungary – Being ecumenical in worship in 1989: An act of holy passion; Mission Council – October 2002, the Church Life Survey and Finance – so dire that something had to be done and Catch the Vision emerged; Churches gel and build ve ain90 9.9 (e eTf 11 0 01(v)-5.5(-9 0 9..2(n)9.6h m)2d b)-15-14 e eu322.5y nh trged

Ecumenism

There were many questions raised as to the current state of play with regard to the United Reformed Church and ecumenism. Some felt that the URC should have the courage to die, this being translated as losing her identity within another Church; others felt that the URC needs to reclaim its own sense of identity, and o er this as a gift to otherch and3e55s8.9(e)-3(r t)-4.5>(

Paper F2

The Church Meeting

Faith and Order Committee

Paper F2

Faith and Order Committee: The Church Meeting

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Elizabeth Welch, Convenor of Faith and Order Commiteee

The Church Meeting as one of the distinctive characteristics of the United Reformed Church

Introduction

In the discussions about the future of the church at the May Mission Council, the church meeting was identi ed as both a distinctive characteristic of the United Reformed Church, and as an area in which more work needs to be done. This paper looks at comments made in Mission Council and the subsequent Faith and Order Commtt Tc EMC /SpaM8 re W 11 0 0 9.cuq4.3 I 68

David Thompson prepared an equally helpful paper (4 pages) on some of the historical issues around church meeting, e.g. the way in which its e ectiveness has been perceived over the centuries and issues in terms of its relationship to the Elders Meeting. The plan is for this paper to be available to those who would like to take a longer historical look at the church meeting and the way in which the issues from previous generations are still issues for the church today.

Theological re ections

It is interesting to note that in the founding documents of the United Reformed Church, the overall theological considerations with regard to the nature of the church are held separately from the particular functions of the various parts of the structure. Where the Church Meeting is written about, it does so in terms of a list of the functions of the church meeting, e.g. who is a member, what is the church meetings role re the call of a minister, and the relationship between the Elders and Church meetings. While the rst functions listed are about outreach, mission, and considering the Christian faith, the issue about the particular nature of the church meeting as part of God's purpose for the church and the world, the place where the mind of Christ is discerned and the church meeting's dependence on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are not spelt out.

What follows are particular theological re ections for Mission Council to consider:

1. The church meeting is a de ning characteristic of the United Reformed Church, but not on its own the de ning characteristic.
2.

10. The church meeting is about discerning God's path for that particular local community,

Questions for Mission Council to discuss

The results of this discussion will be fed in to further work by the Faith and Order Committee on the role of the church meeting and on the undergirding spirituality of the URC as it is re ected, not only in the church meeting, but across the life of the church.

1. You are invited to start by re ecting on the ways in which you have experienced the discernment of God's Spirit in the setting of the church meeting and in other parts of the life of local churches of which you have been part.

2. In the list of theological understandings above, which do you give priority to? What new ones would you add?

3. In what ways do you see the spirituality that undergirds the understanding of the church meeting more widely re ected and lived out across the life of the United Reformed Church?

4. What do you see as the most pressing issues that the URC needs to face with regard to the church meeting? Which issues would you add to the list above?

Paper G1 + G2

Budget 2014 and Beyond

Finance Committee

Paper G1 + G2

Finance Committee:
Budget 2014 and Beyond

Basic Information

Budget 2014 and Beyond

1) Attached as Appendix 2 Column 3 is the draft budget for 2014 which the Finance Committee presents to Mission Council. This budget will be reviewed by the URC Trustees between the date of writing this paper and the meeting of Mission Council.

Income

2) Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund o ers from the synods are the predominant source of income for the budget. The latest information from the synods, on behalf of local churches, suggests that the M&M o ering in 2014 will be a reduction of around £200,000 (£200k) relative to 2013. This continues the trend of M&M giving falling by around 1% a year. With in ation at around 3% this means a reduction of about 4% a year in what the money will buy.

Expenditure on Ministry

3) The largest part of the expenditure side of the budget is the funding for stipends of

to the Finance Committee that they are working on signi cant cost reductions for 2015 and beyond, the Finance Committee recommends that Mission Council accepts this very temporary rise in the Education and Learning budget.

(ii) The new Safeguarding O cer, whose costs are shared 50% by the Baptist Union, represents a further £17k of the additional budget. The Finance Committee accepts that this post is now essential.

Pensions Support

8) Following the large rises in pension fund contributions needed after the 2008 economic crash, Mission Council asked the synods to provide extra funding to avoid too great a dislocation of other parts of the budget. Mission Council agreed in 2011 that this should be phased out by 2016.

9) In the 2014 budget some support is still needed but only £300k from the synods has been assumed, compared with the £1m provided in 2011 and the £600k expected in 2013. A breakdown of this proposed total between the synods based on membership gures is given in Appendix 1.

Resolutions

1. Mission Council notes with gratitude the continuing Pensions Support from the synods and requests synods to continue this support in 2014 at a reduced level which will yield a total contribution of £300k.

2. Mission Council adopts the budget for 2014 set out in Appendix 2.

Looking Further Ahead

10) For the rst time, the Finance Committee o ers Mission Council a look three years ahead. Inevitably there are more uncertainties the further ahead we consider, so the gures for 2015 and 2016 are much less reliable than for 2014. While some known factors have been taken into account, essentially these gures are a projection of what the budget would look like if present trends continue.

11) The projections are set out in Appendix 2 Columns 4 and 5. The same gures are summarised in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Budget Projections 2014-16

£m	2013 Budget	2014 Budget	2015 Projection	2016 Projection
Income				
M&M Fund	19.8	19.6	19.4	19.2
Pensions Support	0.6	0.3	0.3	-
Other	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0
Total	21.3	20.8	20.7	20.2
Expenditure				
Ministerial stipends, pensions, etc	16.6	15.8	15.8	15.6
Programmes & infrastructure	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9
Total	21.5	20.8	20.7	20.5
De cit	0.2	-	-	0.3

12) The rst key assumption behind these numbers is the trend in M&M giving. For lack of contrary evidence, and remembering the likely further fall in membership, it is assumed it continues to fall by 1% pa. The 2016 budget could look very di erent from this projection if the total giving were to start rising.

13) The second key projection is the number of stipendiary ministers. Best current estimates are that after the marked drop during 2013, there is only modest further change in 2014-16. This means the total cost of ministry remains relatively static over those three years. Over the ve years 2011-16 it would have fallen by around 10%, rather less than would be required to meet the Assembly guideline of changing the overall costs of ministry in line with the changes in overall URC membership (c 15%).

14) The overall picture is a projection for a balanced budget again in 2015, assuming there is some synod Pensions Support for one nal year. In 2016, however, if the prediction for M&M giving proves correct, a de cit starts to emerge again. This would imply some further reduction in the resources used by the programme committees, or in the infrastructure support work, will become necessary.

15) Had the reduction in minister numbers in 2013 been likely to recur in subsequent years, there might have been an argument for reopening the option of recruiting ministers onto the URC Roll of Ministers from sister Churches via the granting of Certi cates of Eligibility. But noting the relative stability in minister numbers in 2014-16 and the fact that a de cit threatens to emerge in 2016, adding permanent new costs by granting -3.1(n)-6.2(e)-3(n3MC /Span <<

Appendix 1

Possible Pensions Support from Synods

Synod	2014 Request £k
Northern	15
North Western	30
Mersey	19
Yorkshire	18
East Midlands	19
West Midlands	26

Paper G3

Ministries and Finance Committees:

Proposed Amendments to The Plan for Partnership

insertsshown in italics deletions shown in bold

para 5.2.2	Ministers for whom remuneration for speci c periods has been authorised by the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

Paper I1

Update on CWM Mission Support Programme proposal

Mission Committee

Paper I1

Mission Committee: Update on CWM Mission Support Programme proposal

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Francis Brienen, Secretary for Mission francis.brienen@urc.org.uk
Action required	None – the Mission Committee will bring this matter to Mission Council for decision in 2014
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The Council for World Mission (CWM) makes grants to all its 31 member churches according to an agr84C /Sp4(d b)-5.5(u)-5.4(d)-5.4(g4)-48(

Mission Council – November 2013

Update on the CWM Mission Support Programme Phase 3

Introduction

The United Reformed Church Mission Committee started discussions on Phase 3 of the Mission Support Programme in October 2012. The Committee identi ed the need for evangelism and how to equip people in the United Reformed Church for this task (within the broader context of discipleship) as a focus to be explored for a new mission programme. The Committee also thought about how a consultation process with the church might take place. A small group (Andrew Willett, Janet Sutton Webb, Louise Franklin, Michael Jagessar and Francis Brienen) was asked to do further work and to report back to the Committee in February 2013.

The group met twice between October 2012 and February 2013, on both occasions joined by the CWM European Regional Secretary Wayne Hawkins, and also gathered information from the Synods about their past and current involvement in evangelism, at local and Synod level. Based on this, an initial proposal was developed for discussion by the Mission Committee and for subsequent consultation with potential stakeholders in the programme.

The proposal

The group formulated a proposal for a three-stage process with the overall aim to create a culture of evangelism in the United Reformed Church.

- The rst stage focused on the leadership of the church at Assembly and Synod level and would start with initial research/mapping into what was already happening and consultation with the senior leadership of the whole church for strategic development and prayer. In this stage there would also be conversations with Synods focused on road shows and the setting up of Synod evangelism funds.
- Stage two would see part of stage one replicated at Synod level, with the aim to build vision and plan training. Training of trainers would take place, as would Synod road shows focused on evangelism. Materials would be developed for stage 3.
- In the third stage every church would be provided with material, such as a toolkit and lea ets, guides, booklets to give out etc. They would be encouraged to get involved in rst base evangelism events, changing perceptions and making connections. This might lead to o ering longer 'courses' such as Alpha, Christianity Explored, or something URC speci c. Churches would feed back what they have done via the annual church returns.
- At the end there would be an evaluation and the start of MSP4 on deepening discipleship, the development of which would run alongside stage 2 and 3 of MSP3.

The Mission Committee discussed this initial proposal in February and agreed that it should be o ered for wider consultation to potential stakeholders in a new programme. These included the Mission Council, Synod Moderators and Clerks, the Assembly Committees

and sta , the Resource Centres for Learning, the networks of Mission Enablers, Training and Development O cers and Children and Youth Development O cers, the Church Related Community Workers, FURY, various URC associated groups, ecumenical partners and selected world church partners. It was envisaged that after consultation the proposal would be revised and nalised for discussion and approval by the Mission Council in November 2013 and submission to CWM in December 2013.

The consultation process

The consultation was conducted from March to September 2013. An interim report was brought to the Mission Committee in June 2013 and highlighted a number of common themes and questions that had arisen from the responses received by then. The Committee considered the paper and a rmed the points raised. It concluded that there was much to wrestle with for the church, acknowledging the need for spiritual renewal and con dence in faith sharing. The MSP3 group was asked to consider the comments made and to report back, once the consultation process was nished.

The group met again in September and by then responses had been received from nearly all the groups and committees identi ed, and in addition to that from a number of individuals and local congregations. They con rmed and reinforced the ve themes that had already been identi ed in the interim report in June. They were:

1. **Evangelism as a focus**: faith sharing with con dence was a rmed as important, but there was a mixed response as to whether evangelism should become the focus of our work in the next few years.

2. **Defining evangelism**: responses were divided over the need and the feasibility of reaching a shared understanding of evangelism.

3. **Methodology:** the proposal was seen by many as top down and the wisdom of a centrally introduced strategy was queried. There were also questions over the methodology of the proposed research.

4. **Initiative overload:** many expressed wariness about more programmes and training, and made a plea for recognising what we already have and starting there.

5. **Mapping:** there were questions over mapping as opposed to story telling/sharing and various suggestions to use instead the mapping we already do (e.g. through LMMR).

Several other common themes were also noted. They related to equipping and resourcing people, piloting whatever is developed, and doing in-depth research as groundwork.

However, a much bigger issue emerged. Many of the comments pointed to the need to start several steps back, at the stage of pre-evangelism. Though some of our churches are actively engaged in evangelism, many are not ready. This may be for a variety of reasons, but a recurring theme from the consultation responses related to people lacking con dence in their ability to give expression to/articulate their faith. And that translates into a lack of con dence in God. Enabling this con dence therefore is key and that would involve addressing the underlying questions as to why people are not more con dent in God and discovering and practising ways of expressing one's faith with con dence – from actual lived experience. Ultimately, it is about discipleship, "making a lifelong commitment to working out what being a Christian means in the whole of life, in order to make a world-transforming di erence", as the Methodist Church describes it. Discipleship is at its most basic a response to the call to

Paper J1

Nominations Committee

Contact name and email address	
Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	

Nominations

1. Westminster College Principal

Paper J2

Paper J2

Nominations Committee

Contact name and email address	
Action required	
Draft resolution(s)	**Mission Council appoints the Revd Dr John Bradbury as Director of Studies in Theology and Church History at Westminster College for a further seven years from 1st September 2014.**
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Westminster College, Cambridge

Revd Dr John Bradbury

Review of Tenure, 8th October 2013

Paper L

Paper L

United Reform[illegible] Church T[illegible]: Location of Ch[illegible]ch O□ces

Contact name and email address	[illegible]
Action required	

Location of Church O□ces

Paper M1

Membership of Mission Council

Clerk

Membership of Mission Council

Paper M2

General Secretary:
The O□cers of General Assembly

Paper M3

Paper M3

Clerk
Minutes of the URC Study

PpM4

CaAid

MiChAiGp

PM4

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2 [redacted]

3 [redacted]

Human Sexuality Task Group

Page 01

HUMAN RESOURCES ADVISORY GROUP (HRAG): GHRP

Sta posts:

Safeguarding O cer

PpO2

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] of [illegible] General Secretariat

[illegible]

[illegible]	

1.

- *As background, under the Equality Act 2010 (EqA'10) it is possible to directly discriminate by specifying that a job applicant has a certain 'Protected Characteristic' if, having regard to the context of the work, it is an occupational requirement and application of the requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. The 'Protected Characteristic' of religion or belief includes holding and not holding a particular religion or belief. Under EqA'10 the occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and not merely one of several duties and tasks.*

- *Having reviewed the Job Description for the DGS Administration and Resources role it is my view that there is nothing crucial to the post that would justify imposing a requirement that the applicant must hold a particular religion or belief.*

- *I certainly see the view that as part of the General Secretariat the post holder will be involved in the leadership of the Church generally and therefore there is the requirement of Christianity. However, I do not believe that this is su cient to justify the occupational requirement and if it was challenged, an Employment Judge is likely to find it to be discriminatory. I believe that the aim that you are trying to achieve can be met with the requirement that the applicant is willing to work within the Christian ethos.*

•

Appendix 2

[illegible]

[illegible]	[illegible]
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Paper P

Law and Polity Advisory Group

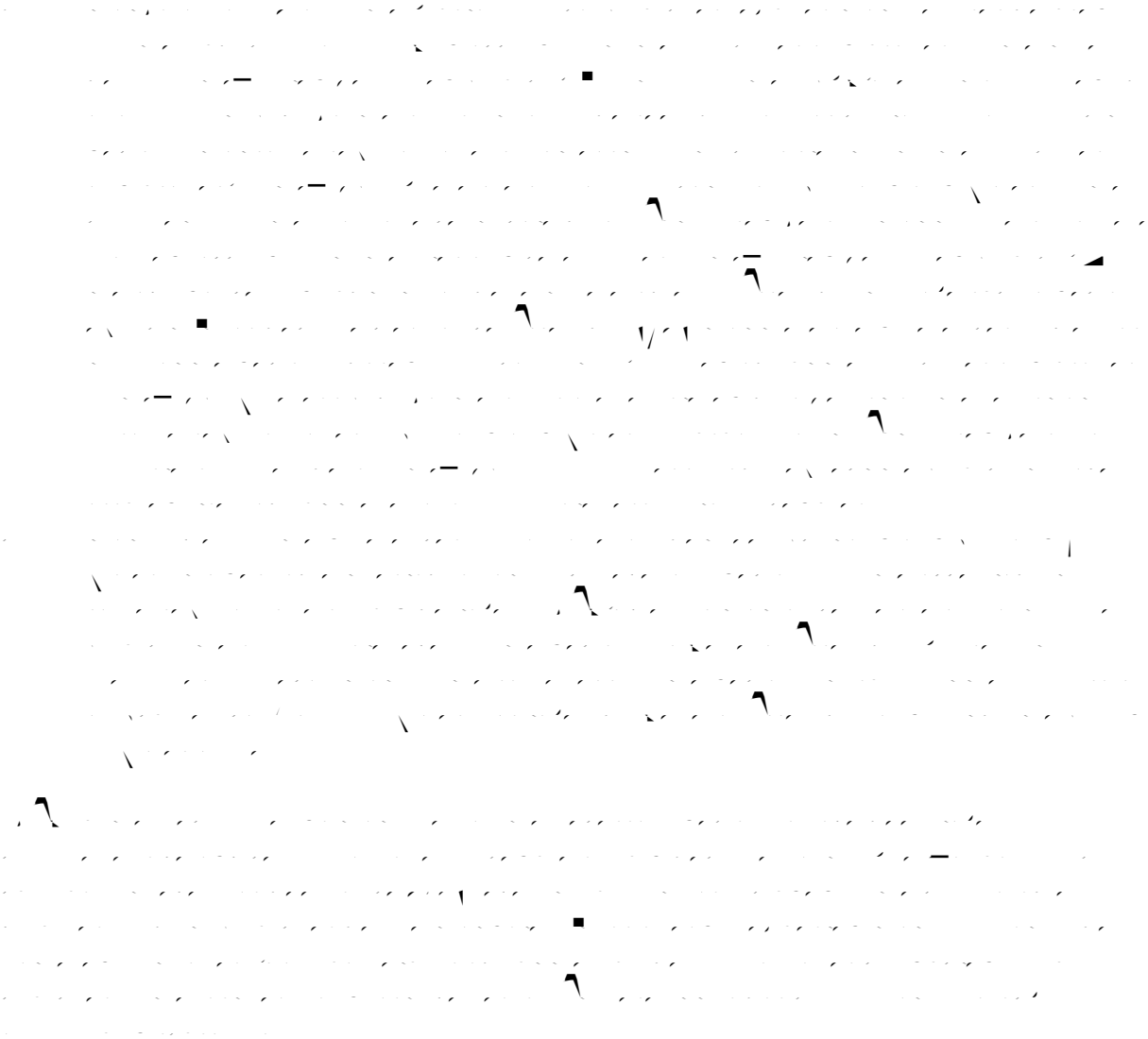
Paper P

Law and Polity Advisory Group

Contact name and	

Report of
Law and Polity Advisory Group

November 2013



Safeguarding Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

In January 2004 Mission Council established a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Reference Group with the following terms of reference:

a) to maintain an overview of the policy o ered to local churches with regard to Criminal Records Bureau disclosures and to make recommendations regarding the development of policy and practice, including the use of the Churches Agency for Safeguarding.

b) to outline principles and monitor current practice in synods when responding to child protection concerns in support of local churches in their implementation of Good Practice.

c) to establish and monitor a process which supports churches in response to the receipt of a blemished Disclosure for a local worker/volunteer.

d) to ensure support for local churches during times of sensitive action regarding child protection.

e) to monitor and advise on the training provision o ered to relevant synod and Assembly-appointed sta regarding sensitive child protection issues.

3. to develop systems for monitoring local church and synod compliance with Good Practice, and to devise strategies for addressing identi ed weaknesses;
4. to foster collaboration with ecumenical partners across the full range of safeguarding issues, including engagement in the development of public policy;
5. speci cally to work closely with the Baptist Union in the development of policy, the delivery of safeguarding education, and the support of synod/regional safeguarding o cers;
6. to oversee the service which the United Reformed Church receives from the Churches Agency for Safeguarding and other relevant agencies.

Paper S

Medium Term Strategy Group: Even Better Synod Resources

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and decision
Draft resolution(s)	To be drafted in light of Mission Council discussion
Alternative options to consider, if any	See paper

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To secure feedback on various ways of improving the resources available to synods in the light of discussions at the May 2013 Mission Council.
Main points	Paras 5-9 Re ection on May Mission Council discussion Paras 10-16 Considering funded Synod Manager posts Paras 17-41 Options for developing the Inter Synod Resource Sharing Process
Previous relevant documents	Paper D1 “Even Better Synods” May 2013 Mission Council
Consultation has taken place with...	Representatives of the Inter Synod Resource Sharing Task Group and Synod representatives

Summary of Impact

Financial	Possible employment of 13 Synod Managers: around £600k Redistribution of income between the synods; this would be nancially neutral to central budget
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Even Better Synod Resources

Purpose

1) This paper is designed to secure feedback on various ways of improving the resources available to synods in the light of discussions at the May 2013 Mission Council.

Background

2) In order to progress one aspect of its remit, the Medium Term Strategy Group (MTSG) brought to the May 2013 meeting of Mission Council a discussion paper Even Better Synods..This was discussed in eight small groups, written feedback was received from all the groups and some re ections brought back by MTSG to the full Mission Council. As a result, Mission Council asked MTSG to do further work on the basis of the discussions at the Council. This paper is part of the response.

3) A full collation of the feedback from the groups is available in the Mission Council section of the URC website (under May 2013, alongside Paper D1).

The Current Reality

4)

A Funded Manager Post

10) The report on the role of the synod moderator that was brought to the 2012 Assembly recommended dividing up the moderator's role between two people and separating pastoral support for ministers from involvement in disciplinary and management issues. The feedback from current moderators and from Mission Council generally was not necessarily to favour that division. There were many who questioned whether separating the pastoral care of ministers from a role in the discipline of ministers was right. However there did seem to be much stronger support for the concept of separating o from the care of ministers some of the internal synod management tasks which often fall to moderators, whether or not they have suitable training and experience, such as line managing sta and being responsible for policies on Health and Safety, Safeguarding and other similar issues.

11) MTSG asked a group with direct day to day experience of a synod o ce to consider a possible Job Description for a full-time Manager post to see whether this can help identify the best boundaries between such a role and that of the moderator. Attached as Appendix 1 is such a Job Description which draws on their work; it is presented alongside the proposed Job Description of the Synod Moderator prepared by the group reviewing the role of the Synod Moderator. A key issue that emerges is the relationship between such a Manager and the post of Synod Clerk. As some Synod Clerks are employees and some are volunteers, this diversity represents just one area where di erent Synods would work out the role of Manager di erently. However we hope that having a broad brush Job Description will help Mission Council focus on whether this proposed post is what the Church now needs.

12)

16) Funding Option C: growing a network in line with income. If current stewardship and TRIO initiatives bear fruit, giving to the Church at large, and to the M&M Fund in particular, might start to grow more rapidly. If this were the case, the rst call on any regular additional income could be deemed to be funding for synod managers. It would be unfair to

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28) The bulk of the resources available to the central budget comes from M&M giving. A radical version of making Church House Synod 14 would be to amalgamate the funds

35) A broad estimate of the income to synods from investment and property sales is of the order of £4m a year, so a 5% levy would produce a similar amount to the present sharing system but a 25% levy, for example, would yield the signi cantly larger £1m. This assumes that all synods were willing to agree to join in the scheme and income did not decline.

36) With such a scheme the proceeds in a given year would be possible to estimate in advance. It would need to be decided on what basis they were shared. Options include

help with medium term planning. A possible way to make the ow of resources more predictable would be to build up a reserve to even out the uctuations in income. Creating a reserve would require a proportion of the income in the initial years to be held back, rather than 100% being distributed to synods immediately.

**Would you favour the “voluntary o er” or the “guided donation” approach?

**If the guided donation approach were adopted, do you agree Option E would best serve the Church’s mission?

**Would you favour holding back a proportion of the income coming into the system in order to build up a reserve?

Next Steps

42)

Paper T1

Updates

Ministerial Incapacity & Discipline

Advisory Group

Paper T1

Ministerial Incapacity & Discipline Advisory Group: Updates

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Hugh C.F. Graham Hughf.graham@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	As attached
Alternative options to consider, if any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To update relevant documentation.
Main points	The Group suggests changes to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure.

G.8.
Add the following to the list at G.8.5 and move the existing G.8.5 and renumber the following accordingly:

G.8.5 “Any Cautions (other than those successfully appealed against).”

Suggested Changes to the Incapacity Procedure

Mission Council agrees to make the following changes to the Incapacity Procedure:

Renumber current paragraph B.1.1 to become B.1.1.1. and add a new paragraph B.1.1.2 as follows:

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Paper T2

Ministerial Incapacity & Discipline Advisory Group: Updates

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Hugh C.F. Graham Hughf.graham@gmail.com
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	As attached
Alternative options to consider, if any	None

Summary of Content

Paper U

Mission Council Advisory Group

Basic Information

actions. These actions have now been taken and the Commission's ndings have been shared with the individuals concerned. With the completion of their work, the Commission has now stood down. Work continues in the Law & Polity Advisory Group and the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC) on the full range of issues in the Commission's reports, including the one presented to Mission Council in May. Because of the pastoral sensitivity of PRWC's reconciliation work, MCAG felt it unhelpful to circulate the Commission's nal report to Mission Council. However, it is available from the general secretary upon request.

4. Blue plaque at Church House
   Early in 2013 a request was received from the Marchmont Community Association to a x a blue plaque under their local scheme to the Wake eld Street wall of URC Church

Paper W1

Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group: Faith & Order Conversations

Basic Information

A proposal for Faith and Order conversations

Methodist Church and United Reformed Church

Background

In his address to the joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the United Reformed Church Mission Council in October 2012, the Revd Dr David Cornick, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, noted that although the two denominations have been close partners for many years, particularly through the life of their united congregations and united areas, and although they have held faith and order conversations with other Churches, they have never held bilateral talks with one another.

The joint meeting also noted two issues that plague the lives of the LEPs. The rst is di ering views of ministry, with Methodist ministers appointed by Conference to xed terms of service and URC ministers called by their pastorates for open-ended terms. There is often awkwardness in the change of ministry from one denomination to the other. The second is the connexional view of Church in Methodism as contrasted with the centrality of the local church in the URC. Methodists expect a certain commonality of practice across the Church while their URC partners expect exibility. When there is a project afoot, permissions happen in di erent ways. There was a clear message from the October 2012 joint meeting that deeper understanding in these particular areas should be sought as part of a larger goal of removing the barriers that impede local ecumenical collaboration.

There is no intention in this proposal that these conversations should be a precursor to the uniting of the two denominations. The purpose is mutual understanding and theological engagement with the hope of relieving some of the tension points in local ecumenism.

Resolutions

1) Mission Council agrees that bilateral conversations should take place with the Methodist Church to undertake theological exploration of the beliefs and practices of the two denominations. These conversations should be commissioned on the following terms:
   a. There should be three people from each of the two Churches, with the URC participants appointed by Mission Council in consultation with the Faith & Order Committee;
   b. The group should meet over a period of two years, with any extension approved by the Methodist Council and the Mission Council as appropriate;
   c. Conversation should focus in the rst instance on the particular questions of theologies of ministry, including appointment/call, and the ecclesiological foundations for connexionalism, congregationalism and Conciliarity;
   d. Other topics may be explored as time permits.
2) Mission Council agrees that the group should report regularly to the two Faith & Order Committees and the Methodist/URC Liaison Group.
3) Mission Council agrees that it will be for the Strategic Oversight Group on the advice of the Methodist/URC Liaison Group to determine whether it is appropriate to take discussions to Methodist Council and/or Mission Council.

2. Task

2.1. The task of the Liaison Group is to focus on the local and intermediate dimensions of the relationship between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church and, in relation to those contexts, to:

¾ explore the two Churches' understandings of their life and mission;

¾ share perspectives and insights from each tradition;

¾ address the issues a ecting their practical co-operation, including theological and non-theological factors and those arising from policy and strategic decisions made by both Churches;

¾ provide advice and information; and

¾ develop appropriate web-based resources that can be printed on request.

2.2. The Liaison Group shall pay particular attention to the following:

¾ matters relating to local ecumenical partnerships involving both Churches;

¾ matters relating to ecumenical/united areas;

¾ the current accuracy of the information, advice, and other resources relevant to the responsibilities of the Liaison Group available on both Churches' websites; [4] and

¾ links to other websites providing information about both traditions, including the national ecumenical instruments (Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Churches Together in England, and Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales), Uniting and United Churches, and international dialogues.

3. Membership

3.1. The membership of the Liaison Group shall comprise:

¾ an equal number of persons from each Church who, together, have a broad range of relevant expertise and experience:

x two co-chairs, one from each Church;

x two co-secretaries, namely the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations of the URC and the Connexional Ecumenical O cer of the Methodist Church;

x up to three other members from each Church;

¾ and one representative of each of the following:

x the Baptist Union of Great Britain;

x the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England; and

x Churches Together in England.

4 This includes information about the faith, worship, life, ministry, and mission of our two churches, training opportunities, the expectations, orientation, and welcome/induction of ministers, and the sharing and use of manses and other church buildings.

Resolution

Mission Council approves the Terms of Reference for the Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group contained in paper W2.

Paper W3

The future of the Joint Property Strategy Group

Strategic Oversight Group

Paper W3

Strategic Oversight Group (Methodist/ URC): Future of the Joint Property Strategy Group

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Roberta Rominger roberta.rominger@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council asks the Nominations Committee to identify two people to join the Revd Lucy Brierley as the

Strategic Oversight Group

The future of the Joint Property Strategy Group

Background

1 The October 2010 joint meeting of the Methodist Council and the URC Mission Council agreed that a new group should be established to undertake work identi ed by the earlier Methodist/URC Buildings Think Tank. Terms of reference were agreed by both councils in spring 2011 and the Joint Property Strategy Group began meeting later that year. Money was budgeted to enable the employment of an executive o cer and the Revd Carla Maurer held this post from September 2012 until May 2013. Currently the post is vacant pending further discussion in the Strategic Oversight Group.

Fundamentals

2 URC participation in this joint work is guided by the following:

- We believe we are called by God to work with other Christians wherever possible.
- The General Assembly has asked for more co-ordination of central structures with the Methodist Church (the resolutions being paralleled by resolutions passed by the Methodist Conference).
- The Assembly has speci cally asked for the possibility of a property advice service to be explored creatively.
- The wealth of the URC is overwhelmingly embedded in property and therefore the e ective use or liquidation of property assets is a key stewardship issue.
- In formal and informal ways, local congregations who work with, or wish to work with, local Methodists plead for perceived administrative and legal blockages to be removed.

Areas of JPSG Activity

3 The JPSG has had some engagement with a variety of topics. The JPSG would like to move some of its work to other groups as follows and this has been agreed by the Strategic Oversight Group.

- Good Endings: This is a project to produce a de nitive paper on the issues surrounding the closure of church buildings, legal, procedural, nancial and pastoral. This work has been passed to the Methodist Connexional Team so that they can prepare a paper for Methodist Conference dealing with speci cally Methodist issues. The URC will in parallel work on pastoral and liturgical resources and would want con rmation that the JPSG/Team work would still be available for incorporation into a wider URC resource; equally the latter would be freely available to the Connexion.
- Reciprocal Capital Investment Arrangements: This work has been passed to the Methodist-URC Liaison Group (MURCLG). The URC Law & Polity Advisory Group will provide input, especially via a sub-group that is currently working on the topic.
- Advice on Property Aspects of Sharing Agreements, Declarations of Intent, etc; this work to rest with the MURCLG.
- Property Advice Service: to be pursued by each denomination independently. As joint work with Methodism is not currently possible, the URC will be exploring an ecumenical service for a variety of smaller denominations eg the Friends, Congregational Federation.

Paper X1

Responses to the recommendations of The Gathering

National Synod of Wales

Paper X1

National Synod of Wales: Responses to the recommendations of The Gathering

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Sally Thomas ecumenical@urcwales.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and transmission to General Assembly
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council recommends to General Assembly that the paper entitled 'United Reformed Church response to the Commission of Covenanted Churches' (Paper X1) be submitted as the United Reformed Church's response to the Commission.
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Recommendations for a Uniting Church in Wales with a number of recommendations for the churches and leadership of all ve denominations to consider.
Main points	These are set out in points 5.1 to 5.6 of the paper.
Previous relevant documents	In October 2012 the Commission for the Covenanting Churches in Wales organised an event called The Gathering. This was in response to a request from the churches at a 2009 meeting that the Commission come up with proposals for unity. In preparation, three working parties with representatives from each denomination plus Cytûn met to address and prepare material on Pastoral Oversight, Church Governance, and a new Liturgy for Holy Communion.The full reports and details of the day itself are on the Cytûn website link: http://www.cydgynulliad.org.uk
Consultation has taken place with...	Churches in the Synod of Wales have been asked to discuss the recommendations. To date 42 have responded and there has also been a Synod discussion. Ecumenically, there has been one meeting of church leaders. The whole process came from a Commission consultation, has been discussed at subsequent Commission meetings and will be discussed at a special meeting in November.

United Reformed Church response to the Commission of Covenanted Churches

1. Process

We see The Gathering process as a step in the continuing ecumenical journey in Wales. We are thankful for the Covenant going back to 1975 and want to continue conversations that make that real for people in Wales, so that the unity we believe we have in God can be seen more clearly.

We recognise that the recommendations from The Gathering are not a full scheme of union, but represent su cient work to test whether the covenant partners are ready for interchangeability of ministry. We o er this response as part of the consultation to help re ne the recommendations into proposals that might gain wider acceptance.

The summary recommendations have been shared with local church meetings and 42 have responded. There have been discussions at some local ecumenical meetings, but it is unfortunate that local reporting back suggests that many local Anglican churches had not heard about The Gathering. The process of each covenant partner making an individual

We a rm that there should be equality of opportunity for people in the discernment of God's call to all ministries in a Uniting Church in Wales. It was through the call of local church meetings that the call to ministry of women and gay people was rst recognised. In the same way, we have a rmed the freedom of local congregations to respond to their context by o ering the registration or blessing of civil partnerships. Whilst not all in the United Reformed Church agree with this, we would expect such freedom to be respected in a Church Uniting in Wales.

3. Possibilities

It will be some time before the responses of other denominations are known. Full reporting back and future steps will be the focus of the next Gathering scheduled for October 2015. The Gathering in 2012 was widely reported and we do not want the reports of the next to be about failure. We are committed to greater ecumenism but do not get the impression from local churches or ecumenical partners that this is the way to do it. The congregational responses to the recommendations as they stand are only part of the story. We are working with other denominations all the time on the deployment of ministers in shared situations and the current recommendations do nothing to make that easier.

We would like to see a mission emphasis as the core element of what happens next. We believe there is more to say about the United Reformed Church position than that re ected in the Gathering reports.

We are mindful of current successful examples of ecumenical collaboration and hope for similar e ective developments -

- Local ecumenical partnerships bringing Christians in a community together.
- Chaplaincy models where labels are not as important as responding to need and showing God's love, where GoN</MC1(h)-1.6(re-11.6(e)-(mo)-9.8(c)-6(a)--5.5(i)1.5(n)-6fRa)6.5(t)0.6(h

5.1 The rst recommendation invites the ve Covenanted Churches to think of themselves as the Church Uniting in Wales.

Within the United Reformed Church in the UK context, for some the image of a bishop is alien

The Commission recommends
5.2 f. That the bishops of all nine jurisdictions in the Church Uniting in Wales consult with each other at least twice a year;
We believe that to adequately and thoroughly address co-operation in mission or deployment

Church in Wales. We know from our current ecumenical partnerships where di erences in

For some denominations this is already happening. For example, the Presbyterian Church of Wales /United Reformed Church Guidelines state (Page 51)
When a minister is serving in a joint church or joint pastorate it is reasonable to expect them to continue to ful l the obligation of their parent denomination.

It is also reasonable to expect them to attend some of the wider councils of the other denomination, in the case of a United Reformed Church Minister, principally Presbytery and in the case of a Presbyterian Church of Wales minister, principally one of the two meetings of Synod each year. These expectations should be made explicit to the minister, the local joint church or pastorate, the Synod Elders and Presbytery before the minister's induction.

And 'How to Make it Work' the guidelines for Methodist / United Reformed Church LEPs (pages 3/4) has -
The status of the minister in the other church.
The authorised procedures of both denominations permit a minister in a Local Ecumenical Partnership to enjoy full status in both churches.

The United Reformed Church paragraph 2(3)(a) enables a Methodist Minister who is directly working in the service of the United Reformed Church within a particular Synod to be a member of that Synod.

United Reformed Church ministers are expected to seek the status of Authorised Minister from the Methodist Conference. There is a requirement to make a declaration that he or she will not during the period of authorisation so preach or act as to deny or repudiate Methodist doctrinal standards.

Having full status in both churches and obligations within two denominations means that it is advisable for the Circuit and the United Reformed Church Synod, in discussion with the local church/ pastorate, to agree on what are reasonable expectations and obligations before the minister is called/appointed. Adjustments can then be made once the minister has settled into his or her style of ministry.

While the bene ts of such mutual recognition of ministry far outweigh the disadvantages, the latter must be acknowledged. Being quali ed for membership of a double quantity of o cial meetings is a mixed blessing. Sensitivity and exibility on the part of the Circuit and Synod as well as the local church(es) and the minister, are needed to decide which must be attended. Ideally, the expectations of the minister in a Methodist/United Reformed Church Local Ecumenical Partnership should be agreed beforehand as part of the terms and conditions of service. The Liaison Committee recommends attendance at Circuit Meeting and the Synods of both Churches as a high priority. The United Reformed Church minister ought to share in the Methodist Circuit Sta meeting. The informal ministers' meetings common in the United Reformed Church, although very valuable, are not equivalent.

5.6 b. The Commission recommends that churches entrust the administration of the Partnership to a Sponsoring Body selected from members of the Commission of Covenanted Churches or Cytûn.
We would welcome and support this happening e ectively. Currently, the United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales has joint liaison groups with both the Methodists and the Presbyterian Church of Wales which consider strategy and give oversight to existing LEPs.

6. Summary Comments - If not this, then what?

We would expect further possibilities to emerge from discussion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are committed to the conversations without a set idea of the conclusions that will be reached. Like the disciples on the Emmaus road, we hope that talking and travelling together will provide the opportunity for the living Word to re-shape our future. We will always be open to God surprising us with fresh recognition, vision, wisdom and hope.

Appendix 1

The 1975 Covenant

Confessing our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour,
and renewing our will to serve his mission in the world,
our several churches have been brought into a new relationship with one another.
* Together we give thanks for all we have in common.
* Together we repent the sin of perpetuating our division.
* Together we make known our understanding
of the obedience to which we are called.

We do not yet know the form union will take.
We approach our task with openness to the Spirit.
We believe that God will guide his Church into ways of truth and peace,
correcting, strengthening and renewing it in accordance with the mind of Christ.

Appendix 2

The Trefeca Declaration 2005

We rea rm our commitment to journeying together in covenant relationship.
In the consultation process of 2003-4
We have heard and understood each other better.
We remain committed to the goal of the journey being
the visible unity of the Church in the way that Christ wills.
As covenanted partners, within the family of Cytûn, we commit ourselves
during the six-year period 2005-2011 to:

* a fuller sharing in one another's ministries
* making the best possible use of the provisions of each church;
* always undertaking new work jointly,
  except where in conscience we must do so separately;
* pooling resources in order to provide a united witness to Wales;
* and listening to what the nation is saying to the Church.

Paper X2

Synod reports on vision2020 implementation

Basic Information

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Action required	For information and re ection
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2010 adopted vision2020 as the framework for mission across the United Reformed Church. Mission Council asked the synods to report to the November 2011 meeting on their progress with use of the framework (paper B2).
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

Synod reports on vision2020 Implementation

A. Dying to Live: vision2020 in Northern Synod

4. Community Partnerships

Other achievements in the Synod

- 2 Church-Related Community Worker posts and 2 community worker posts in the Synod
- Continuing as a partner with the Faith in the Community project in the Diocese of Durham.

5. Hospitality and Diversity

- Returns for 2013 show 25% of church members in the Synod are male and 1% black or minority ethnic members; males make up 36% of adherents, with 4% BME
- Nominations Group seeks balance where possible
- Synod advocates and supports the revised radical welcome campaign.

6. Evangelism

St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island, was a full participant in a mission weekend run by students from Cranmer Hall in March. It is hoped that this might become an annual event. An interesting ecumenical conversation has begun about the opportunities on Holy Island for faith-sharing, with the hope that some resources and activities might be developed for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come each year.

Mission & Evangelism Group seeks to encourage churches to recognise and use opportunities; to help to equip churches; o er information and some training; to enable the movement of ideas through contact with the Link Persons; and to take the fear out of the word "evangelism".

7. Church Growth

Mission & Evangelism Group are considering o ering to do some work on prayer in relation to both evangelism and church growth. This occurs in the context that total church membership in Miad ug o

B. Implementation within the North Western Synod

In March 2010, meeting at Trinity Church Cheadle, the North Western Synod agreed to prioritise three of the Vision 2020 statements for its life and mission. These were Spirituality & Prayer, Community Partnerships and Evangelism.

Spirituality and Prayer

- Since 2010 there will have been two retreats on Lindisfarne: one in May 2010

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Further Work

LMMR needs to be fully implemented. Currently without a Ministerial Self Appraisal Accompaniment Co-Ordinator the Synod has been delayed in assisting local churches to think about their ministry and mission in localities.

Evangelism

- Thinking ahead about… initiative launched within the Synod and then nationally by the Rev Dr John Campbell, Ms Linda Rayner and the Rev Wendy White. Linda wrote of this: I am also aware of many events that were a direct result of the conversations, but were not 'fed back' including one church which held a Taize service on Palm Sunday evening, handed out Holy Week colouring books, held a Saturday workshop creating banners and gardens for Easter Sunday - bringing in the Brownies, and many parents

Groups were set up to look at our Prayer life, our Welcome to all and an Explorers Group working with enquirers about Church Membership.

So far we have:

- Written our Mission Statement.
- Produced an Advice Sheet for newcomers to Communion.
- Produced a draft Welcome Pack. The Welcome Group are in the process of producing the nal version.
- We have implemented the Prayer Group's suggested changes in the use of the prayer book, box and tree; and they are working well.
- Produced a Welcome Sheet for Baptismal Families.
- Engaged with our sister Churches in SPACE to produce a 'What's on in SPACE' booklet to encourage our congregations to interact with one another.

All this is a 'Work in Progress' which we hope will help to build the spiritual life of this Church.

E. East Midlands Synod

Vision2020 has been at the heart of much of the Synod's work in the last six years. Here are the headlines.

1. Development of Pastorate Pro les of Churches who nd themselves in vacancy.
2. LMMR and MASA processes
3. Mission Fund Panel which gives grants to churches
4. Mission Enabling Group which reports to Synod
5. Several presentations at Synod meetings
6. County meetings in the recent past
7. Back To Church Sunday.

F. West Midlands Synod

The West Midlands Synod has not integrated Vision2020 into its strategies. Rather it is using the Vision2020 framework and inhabiting it with its own aspirations and indicators under the Vision2020 statements. A copy of the synod's strategy is available on request.

As an example Local Mission & Ministry Review sits under the Identity statement and we have indicators for the number of pastorates we seek to cover by a given date.

Our Mission Fund sits under the Community Partnerships statement and we have indicators to say we aim to make sure that the Fund becomes a regular part of the synod's life.

The indicators and targets are kept under regular review by Synod Mission Council. Some indicators have already been achieved and so amended or removed. Many more of course have to be amended because we have missed our target or anticipate we will do so.

In any event our pattern is to review all the indicators under all the statements at our annual residential Synod Mission Council. We then look at smaller sections at each of the intervening SMC's to ensure we revise them and keep them up to date and that actions laid on Synod Mission Council speci cally are followed through.

Much of the work indicated was in train when Vision2020 came along. So for example our moves to seek an Evangelist and Mission Enabler. A good amount of the work indicated below would have unfolded without Vison2020. But Vision2020's comprehensive range of statements has enabled uas iefstatemot ad wld waenled uuaate(d)-5.4(e)-3(n)ssie of

The Vision2020 heading(s) a8ns 4(d1 Tf2e1(s (2)3(0)2418.6(i)o s)0)f ti41.9f2e67(2)3(1(u) 0 s1]TJ E15.7)28(

It is regrettable that Southern Synod does not, at this present time, have monies to make large building grants (too many choices in the past which have gone belly-up and depleted reserves). However, we give small grants for:
a) Children's and Youth Work = Turn the Tide
b) New church projects = New Growth Fund
c) Mission/Evangelism projects = Mission Fund

We are working to restore the nances to a position where we shall be able to make larger grants. We have also stopped giving loans simply because we need to explore the implications for this under the Consumer Credit Act.

5) We have many examples of churches in Southern Synod exploring Messy Church, Food banks being set up, and, of course, we continue to help fund a Ukrainian student at our Project Fair Isle on the Kent coast which helps to promote mission to disadvantaged immigrants particularly in the Margate area.

L. National Synod of Wales

M. National Synod of Scotland

a) We o er vision2020 to churches as one of many tools for their mission and outreach, which they use as they so wish. We are not "implementing" vision2020 as such.

i) Vision2020 is one of a "basket" of ways that are used by congregations when considering their ways of being church now and into the future.
ii) This "basket" is primarily advocated through the Synod's Mission & Development O cer, and others, and in particular when facilitating LMMR in local churches, and when churches are looking at ways of growing and/or identifying issues to work on.
iii) Other items in this "basket" include;
- The eight Synod Aspirations (please ask if more detail required) of which we are just about to produce a booklet of 'Faith Talk Starters' for each Aspiration and this is being promoted through our Church Life Committee and Synod Development Team (It is worth noting that the Synod of Scotland developed its Aspirations a couple of years ahead of V2020 and hence why there is a stronger emphasis on Aspirations).
- The Vision for Life materials
- HOPE Heartbeat which is to be promoted to all churches at our Autumn Synod
- Possibly the work being undertaken by the Mission Committee on evangelism and church growth (plans to have workshops over next two residential Synod meetings)
- Various ways of exploring the Bible
- Various ways of being involved in the community
- The "See me……." campaign and pledge against the stigma of mental ill-health made by congregations singly or ecumenically, as in Lanarkshire and Dumfries & Galloway
- The dynamic worship workshops developing in our West Link congregations
- Explorations into faith such as "Living the Questions", Alpha courses, and the like
- Ecumenical engagement; local churches have been invited to get to know their ecumenical neighbours, this has focussed on two strands i) to try to implement our EMU nath

exploration by Gi nock URC & 3 parishes, foermal agreement at Stonehouse. Synod Ecumenical & World Church Committee charged with exploring deeper relationships with parishes. (The National Sponsoring Body is the strategic vehicle for local initiatives, eg. at the Barrhead Church). Exploratory interim ministry at 4 URCs in Fife/Tayside (Dundee/SfeC-7.2(d)311A

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Set and published by the Communications Graphics O ce, Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT on behalf of Mission Council.