

## C: Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church

### 1. General Assembly

- 1.1 The Assembly shall meet at least once in each year. The scheduled meeting in each year, the place and dates of which shall normally be determined by a preceding Assembly, shall be the ordinary meeting of the Assembly. At the completion of the business of the ordinary meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly is adjourned. The members of Assembly at any time between ordinary meetings of the Assembly remain those who were included on the Roll of Assembly at the constitution of the immediately preceding ordinary meeting of the Assembly. Any meeting of the Assembly other than the ordinary meeting shall be a special meeting.
- 1.2 A special meeting of the Assembly may be convened by the Assembly Executive or by either Moderator of the General Assembly.
- 1.3 All meetings of the Assembly shall be convened and held as provided by these rules. The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Assembly Executive and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of synods, district councils and their committees.
- 1.4 The Roll of Assembly shall be made up by the General Secretary. Synods shall send to the General Secretary, the names and addresses of their representatives to the forthcoming Assembly so as to reach the General Secretary not later than fourteen weeks before the meeting of the Assembly. Any necessary amendments to the list shall be notified to the General Secretary not later than two weeks before the meeting of the Assembly, at which time the roll shall be held to be complete.
- 1.5 When a synod cannot fill all its allotted places at Assembly, its vacant seats may be filled from other synods bearing in mind the need to balance lay and ministerial representation.

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unless possessing such a card and unless, when required to do so by the Moderator or the Moderator's deputy, displaying it.

- 2.3 The Assembly shall at its ordinary meeting appoint the members of the Assembly Committees all of which shall be constituted in accordance with the decision of the Assembly. Each committee shall discharge the functions assigned to it by the Assembly and report to the Assembly
- 2.4 When a resolution which directly concerns the life, status or witness of a named member or Minister of the United Reformed Church, a named local church or a church institution is brought to the Assembly by



tellers by whom alone they shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.

- 3.10 As soon as the voting papers have been examined and the result of the poll ascertained, the voting papers shall be closed up under the seal of the tellers or any two of them, and shall be retained by the General Secretary for one month after the election, and shall then be destroyed.
- 3.11 At each ordinary meeting the Assembly shall appoint, upon the nomination of the nominations c

- 3.16 If a Moderator is unable to take office fewer than 60 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly, or resigns from office after induction, or is removed from office after induction, then the General Secretary shall forthwith initiate a postal ballot as described in clause 3.14, and the person so elected shall be inducted at the next meeting of the Assembly Executive, save that if this clause comes into effect less than nine months before the planned meeting of General Assembly, then the remaining Moderator shall serve alone until the next meeting of General Assembly.
- 3.17 During the temporary absence of a Moderator, the other Moderator may serve alone. In the event of a conflict of interest with the business under discussion, the most recent former Moderator without such conflict of interest, who is present and willing to serve, shall serve. If neither Moderator is present, the most recent former Moderator present and willing to serve shall serve.

## 4. General Secretary

- 4.1 The General Secretary, who shall be a Minister of the United Reformed Church, shall be appointed for a period of seven years renewable for successive terms of not more than seven years each. The appointment shall be made according to the following procedure.
- 4.2 The group to appoint or review the General Secretary shall consist of the Moderators of the General Assembly (one of whom shall act as Convener), the Clerk of the General Assembly (who shall act as Secretary), three Conveners of the Assembly standing comm

## 7. Moderators of synod

- 7.1 A Moderator for each synod who shall be a minister of the United Reformed Church shall be appointed by the General Assembly and be responsible to it.
- 7.2.1 Each Moderator shall be appointed for such term not exceeding seven years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit, beginning on a date to be determined by the General Assembly, subject always to the provisions of Rule 7.2.3.
- 7.2.2 The General Assembly shall have power to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms of not more than five years each, subject always to the provisions of Rule 8.2.3.
- 7.2.3 Moderators shall not be eligible to hold office following the elapse of one month from their sixty eighth birthday unless the General Assembly in special circumstances determines otherwise.
- 7.3 The Moderators shall submit a report to each Assembly.

## 8. Appeal, Reference and Constitutional Review (structure, paragraph 5)

- 8.0 Limit of applicability. In single congregational Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Union Churches, these rules shall only apply to business that clearly comes under the jurisdiction of the United Reformed Church, or when it has been agreed by the participating denominations that these rules be used. In such a case, ecumenical representatives may serve on a Commission, as agreed by all parties.

### I – Appeals

- 8.1 The right to appeal from a decision of a Church Meeting belongs to (a) the elders' meeting of the local church concerned and (b) any dissident.
- 8.2 The right to appeal from a decision of an ecumenical area meeting belongs:
- 8.2.1 In the case of a decision in appeal proceedings, to (a) the appellant in those proceedings, (b) the respondent council in those proceedings and (c) any dissident;
- 8.2.2 In the case of any other decision, to (a) the Church Meeting of any local church of the URC subject to the oversight of the area meeting and (b) any dissident.
- 8.3 The right to appeal from a decision of a synod belongs:
- 8.3.1 In the case of a decision in appeal proceedings, to (a) the appellant in those proceedings, (b) the respondent council in those proceedings and (c) any dissident;
- 8.3.2 In the case of any other decision, to (a) the Church Meeting of any local church subject to the oversight of the synod, (b) any ecumenical area meeting subject to the oversight of the synod and (c) any dissident.

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Procedure, or a binding resolution of the General Assembly, and which is not already the subject of an appeal or reference may be considered for constitutional review on the application of

8.9.1 in the case of a synod decision,

- (a) any three members of the General Assembly or
- (b) a majority decision of the Assembly Officers
- (c) the resolution of any two Church Meetings within the synod taking the decision

8.9.2 in the case of any other decision,

- (a) any three members of the synod having oversight of the council taking the decision who are not also members of the council taking the decision or

8.9.3 in any case, of a council or person who would be entitled to appeal from the decision.

8.10 A council or person wishing to apply for constitutional review of a decision must request the Clerk of the respondent council, in writing, to supply a copy of the minute of the decision. This must be done within fourteen days after the applicant has become aware of the decision. The copy minute must be supplied within fourteen days of the request. Within fourteen days of receiving such copy minute, the applicant must notify his or her request for a review, in writing setting out their reasons, to the Clerk of the council with jurisdiction. In case of urgency the request may be notified in advance of receiving the copy minute.

8.11 The Clerk of the council with jurisdiction must forthwith notify the Clerk of the respondent council of the application, and the effect of this shall be to stay the action of the respondent council pending the decision on the review.

#### IV – Commissions, their procedure and their reports

8.12 As soon as the Clerk of the council with jurisdiction has received due notice of an appeal or reference the Officers of Assembly (in the case of the General Assembly), the executive committee or other body charged with the synod's business between sessions (in the case of a synod), or the corresponding organ of an ecumenical area meeting (in the case of such meeting) shall appoint a commission to hear the case and report to the full council. The commission shall consist of five members of the council with jurisdiction representing at least three different churches within that council, except that one person who is not such a member may be appointed in respect of some particular relevant expertise. That person must be a member of the United Reformed Church or, in the case of an ecumenical area meeting only, of one of the other denominations represented on the meeting. No individual personally concerned with the case may serve on the commission. The commission shall proceed as it sees fit subject to the following principles.

8.13 An appellant, or the applicants for constitutional review, shall have the right and may be required to appear at a meeting of the commission. A council referring a dispute or difference for resolution must also appear, unless the individuals named under rule 9.8 appear and the commission considers itself adequately informed regarding the issues in dispute. A respondent council must also appear in support of its decision.



- 8.14 Individual parties appear in person; a council of the church appears by two or more members authorised by the council to represent it.
- 8.15 Appeals, references and applications for constitutional review shall be accompanied by all relevant records and papers. Appellants and applicants shall be entitled to see such papers as they deem necessary in order to bring their case before the commission.
- 8.16 Commissions proceed in the matter in the following order:
- (a) call for and read minutes and papers relevant to the case
  - (b) hear and question the parties
  - (c) consider and decide upon their report in the absence of the parties
  - (d) the parties being recalled, intimate the decision to them
  - (e) report in writing to the council with jurisdiction through its Clerk, who supplies copies of the report to the parties.
- 8.17 The decision of the commission shall have effect as a decision of the full council that commissioned it. The commission's report shall be presented to the council with jurisdiction for information only, at the council's next meeting.
- 8.18



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usually attend a Physical Meeting may be able to attend a Virtual Meeting. Timings should also be considered – if people cannot normally attend a Physical Meeting in the middle of the day, it should not be assumed that they can attend a Virtual Meeting then. This, and any other footnotes, are only examples and do not form part of the Rules.