

Withdrawal of Call

PAPER H5 GA 2023

1. Call and vocation

- 1.1 In the United Reformed Church, ministry is exercised by the whole people of God. Call and vocation are intrinsic to our faith. God calls and we respond, seeking ways to use our God-given gifts, talents, abilities, and opportunities, to be faithful followers and God's presence in the world. Every moment of every day for every follower of Jesus is a response to this call on our lives; all people are called by God - believers or not.
- 1.2 However, within the whole people of God "the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church" (*Basis of Union*, paragraph 20).
- 1.3 Where someone feels a sense of prompting by God to ordained or commissioned ministry the URC seeks to discern this vocation through its various Councils. The Assessment Board discerns if the call is to Church Related Community Work or the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. The Reformed tradition always sites Call to ministry within the context of the consent of the people with whom ministers serve. According to the *Basis of Union*, those called as Ministers of the Word and Sacraments "...may be called to be ministers of local churches, or missionaries overseas, or to some special and approved ministry, and are then ordained and inducted to their office" (*Basis of Union*, paragraph 21). Those called as Church Related Community Workers "... may be called to be Church Related Community Workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, are then commissioned to the office of Church Related Community Worker and inducted to serve in a particular post for a designated period." (*Basis of Union*, paragraph 22).
- 1.4 Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are called to their particular ministry (which might be a local pastorate or project, a Special Category Ministry, a Synod role, or a General Assembly post) normally by a Church Meeting or combined Church Meetings in a Joint or Group Pastorate, or by a Call Group which acts on behalf of a Synod or the General Assembly to which the wider Councils of the Church are asked to concur. Therefore, the *Basis of Union*, is clear that the call of God is confirmed by one of the Councils of the Church. Our Councils determine where and when ministry is needed and ensure good order.
- 1.5 It is recognised that, whilst a call process may be used for non-stipendiary ministers (NSMs) with concurrence given by the Synod, NSMs (categories 1-4) are appointed by the Synod to their particular ministry. However, Synods always

appoint to, and sustain in, such roles considering the views of the church with whom the NSM will be ministering.

- 1.6 Therefore, within the United Reformed Church, a particular call to exercise ministry in a certain time and place is rooted in the call to serve the whole Church which, through its Councils, offers concurrence to local calls in both the receiving and sending Synods.
- 1.7 Most calls come to an end when the minister accepts a call to another pastorate/post/partnership. Concurrence to leave the pastorate/post/partnership is required in both the sending and receiving Synods.
- 1.8 Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers enjoy, by way of ordination or commissioning recognition as ministers of the Church as outlined in the *Basis of Union*. Any withdrawal of a Call from a particular post or appointment will not normally affect that recognition as ministers may still be able to receive a Call and serve in some capacity elsewhere.
- 1.9 For the sake of clarity in this document the term minister shall apply to both Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers.

2. Withdrawal of a Call Through Discipline or Capability Processes

- 2.1 There are two scenarios where a Call might be withdrawn which are covered by existing URC policies and processes:

2.1.1 As a result of the Discipline Process

2.1.2 As a result of the Capability Process

3. Ministers Move On

- 3.1 Active ministers, of course may end a Call by seeking a new Call at any time for a number of reasons:
 - a) a minister accepts a new Call at any time, realising a new challenge would be welcomed or that their ministry in that particular place is concluded;
 - b) a minister retires normally upon reaching the normal retirement age unless the processes for an extension of service have been followed;
 - c) a minister resigns seeking some other form of work or ministry outwith the United Reformed Church;

d)

Minister attends in person, the Interim Moderator will invite the Minister to speak. The Minister may be accompanied by a friend or ministry colleague for pastoral support. Such a Call shall be sustained by the majority originally required to issue the call. It is always open for an appeal to be lodged against such a decision using the normal appeals process.

- 4.6** In an LEP where a URC minister is in post, it is always open to the Elders' Meeting (or equivalent body in the LEP) to ask the Church Meeting to withdraw the Call. In such circumstances the Synod Moderator will discern if mediation would be fruitful as well as consulting with the appropriate leadership personnel in the denominations which are partners of the LEP, to ensure they are fully informed at all stages of the process. If mediation is not deemed fruitful, or has failed, then the

6. Stipend Support

- 6.1** Where the minister is actively engaging in the Call process, their stipend should continue for six months whilst looking for a new Call.
- 6.2** This support may be continued up to a further six months where the minister continues to actively engage with the process.
- 6.3** After 12 months, and where there is a concern for welfare, the Synod Moderator shall make an application to the GA Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee for further stipend support.

7. Appeal

- 7.1** The appeal will be conducted in line with the United Reformed Church's appeals procedure as set out in the Rules of Procedure and should be notified to the Clerk of the appropriate Council of the Church. Appellants should ask for a copy of the minute of the decision within 14 days of being notified of the decision, and lodge their appeal with the Clerk of the appropriate Synod within a further 14 days.

