The United Reformed Church

EDUCATION
FOR MINISTRY

Ministries of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work

June 2024

Candidating for NSM Model (Local) ministry

Introduction

You may be reading this because you have attended an Enquirers' Event or had a conversation with your minister or Synod Moderator. If so, you may have already begun to explore a sense that God is calling you serve as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments or as a Church Related Community Worker.

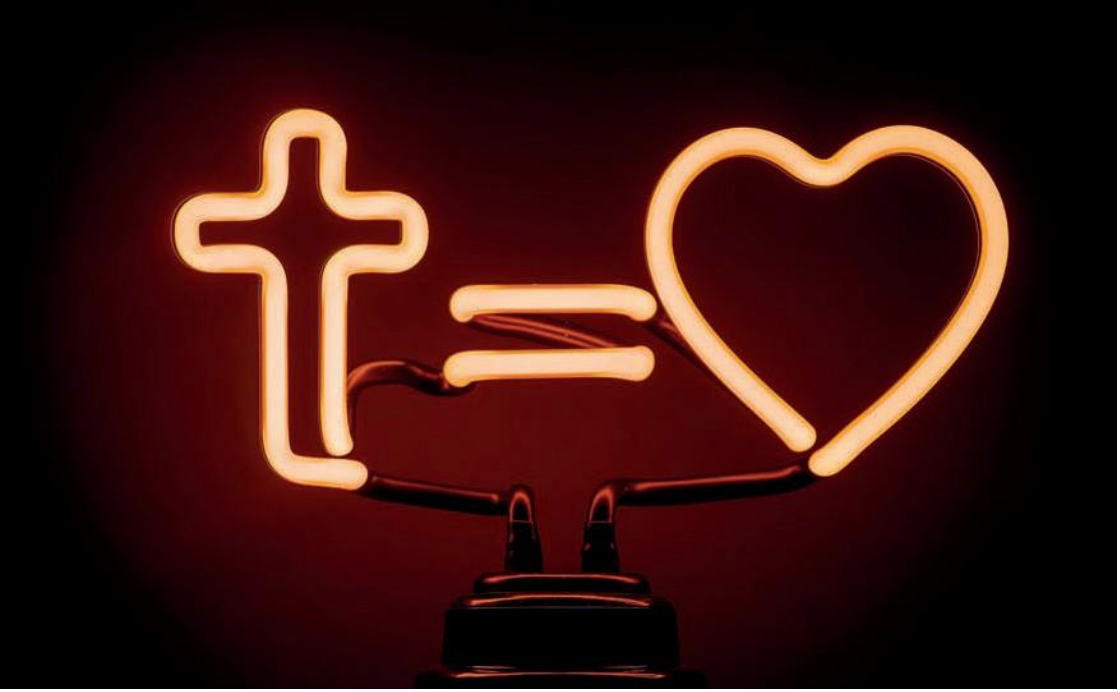
Alternatively, you may have come across this booklet at a Synod event, aware of a sense of Calling but not yet ready to share it more widely. Wherever you find yourself are on this journey, this is a good moment to begin reflecting prayerfully on what it might mean to test that call within the life of the Church.

The United Reformed Church understands vocation as something discerned within the whole people of God. The process you are entering is therefore not an application for a role, but a shared journey of listening — to God, to yourself, and to the Church – as together we to seek God's will and calling on your life.

You will be invited into a series of conversations with your minister or Interim Moderator, your Synod Moderator and Synod Candidating Secretary or equivalent. In time, and where appropriate, this may lead to a more formal process of discernment involving your local Church Meeting, the Synod, and the General Assembly Assessment Conference.

The different Councils of the Church are all involved in the process of discernment. This reflects the conviction that those called to ministry do not exist in isolation, but are called to serve within, and on behalf of, the whole Church

'... you will not exist in isolation from other Church members.'



The Nature of Calling: Internal and External Discernment

In the Reformed tradition, calling is understood as both **deeply personal and ecclesial.**

Internal Call
An inner call is that growing, and sometimes unsettling, awareness that God is drawing you towards a particular form of ministry. It may arise through prayer, through the encouragement of others, through life experience, or through a deepening engagement with Scripture and the life of the Church.

This sense of call is often marked by:

- a desire to serve Christ and the Church more fully;
- a recognition of particular gifts or emerging vocation;
- a persistence that does not easily fade, even when tested.

Yet the Church recognises that an inner sense of call, however sincere, requires testing.

In the United Reformed Church, this discernment is conciliar, exercised through:

- the local Church Meeting, which knows you in community;
- the Synod, which tests vocation more widely and offers oversight;
- the Assessment Board acting on behalf of the General Assembly, which discerns readiness for training and ministry across the whole Church.

This reflects a fundamental principle: no one ministers in isolation. Those set apart for ministry do so because the Church has, prayerfully and carefully, recognised that calling.

A Shared Discernment

Discernment is therefore a shared and mutual process. You are discerning whether God is calling you into this form of ministry. The Church is discerning whether it recognises and affirms that Call. At any stage, it may become clear that a different path is right. This is not a failure, but faithful response to what has been discerned. Throughout this process, both you and the Church are called to remain open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, trusting that God works through prayer, conversation, and the life of the gathered community.

The Journey of Discernment

The journey from initial enquiry to possible ordination or commissioning is one of the most significant steps in Christian discipleship. It demands a great deal in terms of commitment, openness, honesty, humility, and courage.

It is also a journey without a guaranteed outcome. At each stage, there is space for reflection, growth, and, where necessary, redirection.

The purpose of the process is:

- To explore the sense of call
- To recognise individual qualities
- To identify the potential to acquire further skills and knowledge through training.

[General Assembly 1996]

This is not about presenting a finished version of yourself, but about demonstrating a willingness to be shaped, spiritually, theologically, and personally, within the life of the Church.

At various stages, decisions will be made by the councils of the Church: by the Assessment Conference in relation to entry into training; by Resource Centres for Learning as candidates progress through formation; and by local pastorates or communities as they discern whether someone is called to serve in a particular context.

In all such decisions, great care is taken to act with justice, wisdom, and prayerfulness. Those who enter this process are invited to remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, trusting that God speaks through the councils, people, and processes of the Church as together we seek to discern God's will.

So what is the difference between NSM and NSM (Local)

So... what is the difference between Non-Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary (Local)? Like all ministries, Non-Stipendiary Ministry of the Word and Sacraments (NSM) is both a gift and a calling. Much valuable ministry has been undertaken within the United Reformed Church by non-stipendiary Ministers (NSMs). In many cases this could equally have been undertaken by stipendiary ministers. It is an important principle that there is parity within the ordained Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. It is also an important principle that we sometimes respond to God's call to new, emerging and pioneering ministries, as well as ministry in particular sectors, often referred to as chaplaincy. NSM has often been an important component of such initiatives.

The United Reformed Church has recognised non-stipendiary ministry since 1979–80, when General Assembly established three patterns of service. These reflected different ways in which Ministers of the Word and Sacraments could exercise their ministry: serving as part of a local ministry team in one church, providing pastoral oversight of a congregation or group of churches, or combining ordained ministry with secular employment as a focus for Christian witness in the workplace or wider community.

In 2018, General Assembly authorised a fourth pattern of service, enabling candidates to train locally for a clearly defined local ministry. Although these models provided flexibility, the numbered designations increasingly caused confusion, with candidates often identifying with a particular "model" rather than understanding ministry as a single calling expressed in different contexts.

Following a review by the Ministries Committee, General Assembly in 2025 therefore agreed to simplify the terminology. Whilst the historic model numbers remain for administrative purposes, the Church now uses two clear designations that reflect the way ministers are formed and deployed: **Non-Stipendiary Minister (NSM)** for those undertaking the full programme of formation for wider deployment within the Church, and **Non-Stipendiary Minister (Local) (NSM(Local))** for those whose training is tailored to a specific local ministry context. This change places the emphasis once again on the Church's discernment of vocation and the shared ministry of the whole Church, rather than on a system of numbered categories.

That said, the call to ministry for NSM Model (Local) should be determined in the same way as other calls to Ministry of Word and Sacraments through both the Synod candidating process and the Assembly Assessment Conference. It shall be for the Assessment Board, with the guidance of the Education and Learning Panel, to determine what training needs to be undertaken.

There are three major differences between NSM (Local) andNSM: Ministry Vision, Portfolio Approach, Length of training and non- transferability to another local setting.

a) Ministry Vision

One major difference between NSM (Local) and NSM is that for Model 4 ministry the local church with the Synod Pastoral Committee (or its equivalent) needs to produce a ministry vision:

- What is the Mission Context? (eg. inner city/urban/suburban/ market town/rural/coastal town; population size and composition, ecumenical scene etc)
- What is the Church Context? (eg. size of congregation, existing and recent ministries, expectations, theology etc.)
- How is this ministry consistent with the synod's deployment strategy?
- What is the Ministry Vision and Priorities? (What are the issues to be tackled and the core work that you have identified?)
- What do you see as the Minister's Role Priorities and how do these relate to the Marks of Ministry?

In response you will need to reflect on what you read about the mission context and ministry vision, and write a response upon that reflection as well as about your personal vision for the local church and its setting. You will need to think about how these priorities relate to the URC's Marks of Ministry (Mission Council 2019): To what extent are you already, and how can you grow as:

- A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ
- A person of integrity and resilience
- A contextual theologian
- A worship leader and preacher
- A pastor
- A missionary and evangelist

'Development of your portfolio of evidence is a learning tool in itself'

- A public figure
- A communicator
- A committed participant in the councils of the Church
- A reformer?

You may not understand all these terms at this stage, but you will be given a copy of the Marks of Ministry as you candidate. This document gives more detail about each of the Marks of Ministry. The ministry vision for your candidacy, which needs to be formulated at an early stage in the assessment process, and your response to it, becomes a formal document, to be used and developed as a key tool in the discernment process at the Assessment Conference stage, and during your training.

b) Portfolio approach

Another way NSM (Local) differs from the other NSM models is that you will not necessarily be required to study for a diploma or a degree. Instead, you will be required to build a portfolio. The portfolio is your selection of material, presented in a format agreed with the Resource Centre for Learning responsible for your training. This will evidence your learning and growth through your training.

Ministerial formation changes you. You may choose to include things to show that you have gained or developed particular skills, experiences, attitudes and understanding. You can also use the portfolio to save resources or materials that you think will be useful in your continuing discipleship journey.

For many, it may take two years or more. It is a period of growth, exploration, and deepening understanding

It is important to understand that the portfolio should be built up throughout your training, not filled with appropriate material at the end for the final marking process. This development of your portfolio of evidence is a learning tool in itself, so that both you and the Resource Centre for Learning, can see the journey your training has supported.

c) Length of training

The pattern for training will have been determined by the Education and Learning panel at the Assessment Conference. Training will be no less than two years. It is noted that not all students have the aptitude to learn in the same way and to the same level. Should you enter training, NSM (Local) will have been discerned, by the Church, to be the call of God upon your life and at the same time a discernment process will consider how best your training will support the outworking of that call.

The Assessment Board in 2021 determined that, as with other training for ministry, the training shall be primarily in person (no less than 80%) but with some components delivered online.

> *'It is important that every candidate for ministry... should be open to learning and growing through continued training'*

On the other hand, you may think that, because you have been involved and active in your local church for a long time, you do not need two years' training. It is important that every candidate for ministry in the United Reformed Church, and every serving minister too, should be open to learning and growing through continued training. An unwillingness to learn will not be helpful during the assessment process or during EM1. Training for NSM (Local) is not a "rubber stamping" exercise that ordains you into the work you have already been undertaking.

All training begins where a student is and supports their further development against the ministry vision and Marks of Ministry.

You may find a conversation with your synod candidating or training officer will help you to reconsider your initial responses to the training that is set out for you if you have any doubts about it.

What do I do next?

The process for candidating falls broadly into two stages: the informal enquiry stage and the formal assessment stage.

STAGE 1

The enquiry stage

The enquiry stage is an informal period of exploration and consists of two main elements:

- A conversation with your Minister or the Interim Moderator (where there is no Minister) to begin exploring your sense of Call;
- A meeting with Synod Moderator, or their deputy, who will provide further information about the process and consider your eligibility for candidating.

The Moderator has a responsibility to ensure that potential candidates meet the basic criteria set by the General Assembly, including those relating to age, membership, and education, as well as to listen carefully to your sense of vocation.

Where these criteria are not yet met, the Moderator will discuss with you what steps might be taken to fulfil them, or what other forms of service you may be encouraged to offer within the Church.

You can contact the Synod Moderator via your Synod Office.

At any point during this stage, you are encouraged to attend an Enquirers' Event. These are held twice a year online and offer an opportunity to meet those already in ministry, as well as to ask questions of the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries): ministries@urc.org.uk

'Enquirers Event ... the opportunity to meet with those exercising ministry as well as to ask questions'

Before entering the formal assessment process, there are a number of criteria which must be met. These are designed to ensure that those exploring a call to ministry are appropriately prepared for discernment and, if commended, for training.

So…..what are the pre-assessment criteria?

Prospective candidates are expected to:

- have been a member of the United Reformed Church for at least two years prior to candidating;

- meet the age criteria agreed by the General Assembly 1997: the minimum age for training is 18 for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and 21 for Church Related Community Work; candidates may begin exploring a call before reaching this age and should not be discouraged from doing so; for stipendiary ministry, application must be made before the candidate's 53rd birthday; there is no upper age limit for non-stipendiary ministry;

- in the case of candidates for the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, provide evidence of having conducted at least one service and preached one sermon, to submit with your application. At the Assessment Conference the candidate will be asked to make a 10-minute presentation on their understanding of Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, answering the question ***'In what ways can our faith produce the actions that make a positive difference to people and their communities?'***

- in the case of candidates for Church Related Community Work, have evidence of experience of some form of community work. At the Assessment Conference the candidate will be asked to make a 10-minute presentation on their understanding of CRCW ministry, answering the question ***'In what ways can our faith produce the actions that make a positive difference to people and their communities?'***

Areas of Discernment: what kinds of questions will I be asked?

- understand, accept and be committed to the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church, in particular the ordination and commissioning promises and the statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church and;

- have attended Church Meeting and Synod Meeting;

- supply reflective accounts of both the Church Meeting and Synod Meeting attended;

- satisfy the required psychological screening indicating fitness for training both ordained or commissioned;

- complete the form relating to disclosure of criminal convictions and court orders.

In addition, prospective candidates must show they are able to undertake the academic aspects of ministerial training. The minimum requirements will be those agreed from time to time by General Assembly on the advice of the Ministries Committee. In order to be accepted as a candidate for training for both Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary ministry, the candidate will need to have reached the following educational standard:

- GCSE (Grade 9-4) or Scottish Highers 5 (Grades A-C) in English Language or the equivalent (IELTS 6.5 or C1) as an essential pre-requisite.

Plus one of the following:

- 2 'A' Level's;

- 2 Scottish 'Highers';

- A degree from a UK university or equivalent;

- 120 first degree credits from the Open University or other UK University working on a modular system;

- An advanced GNVQ, involving a substantial quantity of discursive work (Level 3 and above);

- A successful completion of the two-year Assembly AccreditedLay Preaching Course including the successful completion of the portfolio of evidence. Details of all the requirements can be found in the Handbook, available from: ministries@urc.org.uk

- A successful completion of the one-two year Foundation Award in Theology, Mission and Ministry with the University of Durham through Northern College. Please speak with the DGS (Ministries) for further information;

- Such professional qualifications or experience of life and work as, in the opinion of the Ministries Committee are of equivalent standard and provides a suitable foundation for training.

This stage should be approached carefully and without undue haste. For many, it may take two years or more. It is a period of growth, exploration, and deepening understanding.

Support from the local church and synod is vital throughout this time. Opportunities such as shadowing ministers or visiting existing ministries may be offered to assist discernment.

The Synod Moderator, or their deputy, is responsible for confirming that these criteria have been met before the formal process begins.

Once this has been established, your details will be passed to the Synod Candidating Secretary, who will issue the application materials. At this point, the formal candidating process begins.

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'Enquirers Event ... the opportunity to meet with those exercising ministry as well as to ask questions'

STAGE 2

The formal assessment stage

The formal assessment process involves three decisions reflecting the conciliar nature of the Church.

- **Church Meeting commendation**.

Your local Church Meeting will consider whether to commend you for candidating.

If it does so, it will provide a reference to the Synod.

If it does not, the process will not proceed further at this stage.

- **Synod interviews.**

The Synod will undertake a fuller process of discernment, which may include interviews, placements, or shadowing opportunities.

Candidates for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments will normally undertake placement experiences.

Candidates for Church Related Community Work will be expected to visit and engage with established CRCW contexts.

You will also be required to attend a Church Meeting and a Synod meeting and submit reflective accounts. There are guidelines to assist you.

If the Synod commends you, your application will be forwarded to the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) for consideration at the next Assessment Conference. Therefore, any candidate who goes on to the Assessment Conference goes with the recommendation of the Synod.

Where a candidate is not recommended, appropriate pastoral support should be offered, including guidance on next steps. However, you will not proceed to the next stage.

- The Assessment Conference

The Assessment Board, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, makes the final decision regarding whether a candidate should proceed to training or not

Candidates are not assessed on having complete knowledge or experience, but on their potential, self-awareness, and openness to formation.

If you are candidating for Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, reading the Marks of Ministry (Mission Council 2019) and the3 Competencies and Expected Standards (General Assembly 2026) will be helpful. If you are candidating for Church Related Community Work ministry, reading the Core Competencies (2023) will be helpful. These papers can be obtained from your Candidating Secretary or equivalent.

Questions will be asked around your:

Faith

- Christian journey and devotional life;
- sense of call;
- developing understanding of Scripture and the Christian faith;
- wareness of their own theological position;
- capacity to engage with the diversity of the United Reformed Church.

Ministry of Word and Sacraments

- understanding of worship, preaching, and the sacraments;
- understanding and awareness of the promises made at ordination;
- willingness to serve in a range of contexts;
- understanding of pastoral care and ministerial responsibility.

Church Related Community Work

- understanding of community development and practical theology;
- capacity to enable transformation and change;
- awareness of social context and power;
- skills in leadership, collaboration, and communication;
- ability to engage in worship and theological reflection.

Personal Development and Character

- self-awareness and emotional maturity;
- ability to reflect on personal experience;
- capacity to handle challenge and conflict;
- commitment to growth and learning;

- respect for others and appreciation of difference;
- communication skills;
- ability to respond positively to ministerial education and training;
- ability to organise life, work, and rest.

The Church and Its Life

- understanding of the wider Reformed tradition;
- engagement with the councils of the Church;
- awareness of ecumenical relationships;
- understanding of the ministry of the whole people of God.

The Church in the World

- understanding of mission of the Church and how their ministry can contribute to it;
- awareness of social issues and how the church might respond to them;
- ability to relate faith to contemporary context.

Once your application form has been passed onto the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) for the Assessment Board by the Synod Candidating Secretary, you will hear from the Ministries Office with details of the Assessment Conference and advising you that you will need to undergo psychometric testing with Ministries' preferred provider prior to the conference.

This psychometric testing evaluates your Personal Development. A professionally trained person in the field of Personal Development assists the Assessment Conference through appropriate tests and conversation in order to help evaluate potential and identify particular issues.

> *'The emphasis should be ... on self-awareness and the desire and potential to learn more'*

What happens at Assessment Conference?

The Assessment Conference seeks to reach a careful and prayerful judgement about a candidate's readiness and potential for ministry

In 1996 General Assembly agreed Criteria for Assessment. Both these criteria and the fundamental qualifications identified in Preparing Today for Tomorrow's Ministry 1982 are still valid. Although originally written in relation to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments these fundamental qualifications apply equally to Church Related Community Work:

1. A total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and a growing experience of shared life in the Spirit so that the worship and service of God becomes the minister's central and controlling passion. We need radical dissenters from the false worship of our society, whose dissent does not drive them (timidly or defiantly) into a ghetto but out into the world.

2. A growing familiarity with an understanding of the Bible and the Christian tradition, especially – but not exclusively – in its Reformed development, constantly extended and enriched by wide reading and by a study that neither evades the critical questions, nor allows them to silence the central message. We need men and women whose ears are accustomed to listening to the word of God in the scripture and who know how to nourish others with that same word.

3. An informed and passionate involvement in the issues of the contemporary world. Clearly this is not to ask for a pretended omniscience. It is to ask for men and women who aware of the world they live in and committed to doing the will of God in its affairs.

4. Because we live in a society which is mobile and pluriform, the church must be as varied and open as the human situations to which it must minister. We need, therefore, not one style of ministry, but many, exercised by women and men, white and black, conservative and radical, working class and middle class, paid and unpaid. We need to look for and encourage very varied gifts, temperaments and abilities.

5. It follows that one minister cannot fulfil all roles. Collaboration and teamwork will be the marks of a relevant ministry, not omnicompetence. The gifts for animating and enabling groups and teams of colleagues, and for evoking the skills of others and the readiness to take a subordinate place – these are the marks of genuine leader and are more to be desired than the gifts which attract attention to an outstanding individual.

6. The church is a community of persons of very different ages and in different stages in their discipleship, seeking to share good news with others. The arts of interpersonal communication are fundamental to its life. We need ministers skilled in these arts, aware of the many different levels at which communication takes place, able to exercise and help others to exercise the arts of preaching, of teaching adults and children, of listening and counselling, and having enough sensitivity to be able to encourage the use of music, drama, dance and visual symbol in worship and in the communication of the gospel.

7. We need ministers who know that they must be learners all through life, who recognise that their initial training can be only a small beginning, who remain to the end eager to reach out for fuller understanding, greater competence, deeper discipleship.

At the Assessment Conference, candidates take part in:

- two in-depth interviews;
- a ten-minute presentation;
- group exercises;
- psychological assessment;
- an educational interview regarding training pathways.

The interviews

The indepth interviews are conducted by the Assessment Panel which is drawn from the Assessment Board appointed by the General Assembly. It includes experienced ordained, commissioned and lay members, those with particular gifts in counselling, personnel management, theological perception, those with personal knowledge of various styles of ministry, community development work and from differing theological stances.

A panel will normally consist of 4 members, working in pairs.

The task is demanding, searching and at times deeply moving, and assessors are all too well aware of the responsibility laid upon them.

The panel receives all the paperwork in the candidate's application. Interviewers read these papers before meeting the candidate so that the interview can be conducted in the light of the individual's concerns and personal statement.

Interviews take account of previous experience in the church and the community, the circumstances of a call, a candidate's devotional life, expectation of future ministry and views about the training they feel they need.

The application form and various references, including a report from the Synod, form the basis of discussion, but the conference provides the opportunity to go much deeper.

Often the candidates are faced with questions about their faith or themselves which have never occurred to them before, and it is clearly a learning process for them, let alone the assessors.

Sometimes the assessors challenge the candidate to think about another form of ministry other than the one they have candidate for. This is all part of the on-going discernment process.

The Presentation
For all candidates, there will be a 10 minute presentation on their understanding of faith producing actions which make a positive difference to people and their communities. This will be presented to all the assessors.

Participation in group exercises.
All candidates take part in two group exercises which help to demonstrate their awareness of current issues, pastoral sensitivity and the ability to work collaboratively.

Interview with the Education and Learning Board
All candidates will also have an educational interview with the Education and Learning Board. The Education and Learning Board at an Assessment Conferences consists of representatives of the Resource Centres for Learning and the Ministries Committee. Board members meet with each candidate to discuss the training programme appropriate for the ministry for which the candidate is applying. The following Code of Practice has been agreed by the General Assembly:

The Assessment Conferences shall take careful account of any needs expressed by a candidate. Factors to be taken into account will include: -

- The Resource Centre for Learning (RCL) which will best enable the student to develop personally and spiritually;
- The kind of course most suitable;
- The size and balance of the student body at any particular time;
- The final choice is without prejudice to the admission procedures of the college.

A subsequent change of Resource Centre at the request of the candidate will only be recommended if good reasons can be clearly stated to all concerned.

In the interest of all concerned, a candidate may contact or visit the RCLs before the Assessment Conference.

Pastoral care
This is exercised by a chaplain, who is not part of the assessment process. The chaplain's role is to lead worship and be available to candidates for support and debriefing. The assessors are very much aware of the role of Synods both before and after the Assessment Conference in ensuring that pastoral support is offered to all candidates, whether or not they are commended for training.

Worship
This is an important part of the Assessment Conference and is led by the chaplain.

'Assessment Conference ... The task is demanding, searching and at times deeply moving'

What happens after the Assessment Conference? When will I hear whether I have been accepted?

At the end of this Conference two decisions will have been made on behalf of the United Reformed Church, recognising that the Assessment Board has a mandate to do its work from General Assembly.

- The first decision taken by the Assessment Board will be whether the candidate may or may not go forward for training.

- If there is a positive decision, it will be accompanied by second decision based on the recommendation taken by the Education and Learning Board as to the Resource Centre for Learning through which the candidate will be trained. The Education and Learning Board will also outline the nature and length of that training.

- No candidate will be informed immediately of the decisions of the Assessment and Education and Learning Boards. Arrangements need to be made with the DGS (Ministries) for a meeting between representatives of the Synod Ministries Committee (or equivalent) and the Assessment Board to discuss any implications of the decision reached regarding the candidate.

- This will take place within two weeks after the Assessment Conference and the candidate will be informed of the decision as soon as possible after that meeting, preferably on the same day.

- The meeting with the candidate is usually in person. One or two members of the Assessment Board will come usually to your Synod Office, meet with representatives of the Synod Students and Candidates panel or equivalent, before meeting with you.

- Any offer of training is subject to satisfactory completion of the necessary medical screening (as agreed by Mission Council in May 2011), attendance at the You're Welcome: An Introduction to the Ethos and History of the United Reformed Church Course, and a satisfactory DBS/PVG.

- Once a student, you will be sent to an RCL where all the processes of that RCL will apply to the student, whose continued assessment is held by the college under the overall care of the United Reformed Church. Students are referred to the Oversight and Care paper which will be provided to all students before they enter their Resource Centre for Learning.

- Any appeal against the Assessment Board decision will be made by the candidate using the Assessment Board Appeal process within 14 days on hearing the decision and on the basis that the approved procedure has not been followed. Details from this can be sought from the Ministries Office: ministries@urc.org.uk.

- Candidates are free to reapply after two years.

> *"Ministry.... is about standing at the intersection of the gospel and ordinary life"*

The best thing about being a minister is you never stop discovering who God is. Every conversation, every funeral, every baptism, every church meeting, every act of worship becomes another opportunity to see Christ at work people and communities. It is a lifelong privilege to accompany others on that journey while continuing to be transformed yourself.

A prayer for those exploring God's call

Loving God
guide me as I seek your way for me;
When I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future help me to search openly
and listen for your call.
Set before me the example of Jesus Christ;
Fill me with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit
that I may respond generously in loving service with the special gifts you have given me trusting in your grace.
Amen.

Flow chart for the candidating process for NSM 4

Candidate meets with Synod Moderator – NOT LESS THAN SIX MONTHS BEFORE AN ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE

Candidate does not meet the pre-assessment criteria. Moderator, with Synod Ministries Committee (or equivalent), Candidating Secretary and candidate, work on the timetable in order for the criteria to be fulfilled. **This may take two years.** *Advice to be sought from Ministries and Education and Learning Secretaries.*

All pre-assessment criteria in place, candidate can proceed. Candidating Secretary informed, timetable worked out with Ministries Office, Synod and candidate. Ministries Office asked to provisionally pencil in attendance at an Assessment Conference. Candidate given application form.

The Synod Moderator (or their nominated representative) begins work with the local church on the ministry vision, role description and person specification and fills out Part A of the proforma.

Arrangements made for the candidate to:

- shadow a minister or CRCW
- conduct a service or visit a CRCW post
- write reflective accounts on Church Meeting and a meeting of Synod
- complete Part B of the NSM 4 proforma. **Depending on the dates of meetings, this part of the procedure could take at least four months.**

Candidating Secretary receives the candidate's application form and personal references.

Church meeting interview and decision – HELD NOT LESS THAN 14 WEEKS BEFORE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE

Decision not to proceed. Minister or Interim Moderator and Elders need to debrief and help candidate explore vocation in a different way.

Decision to recommend. Send decision next day or ASAP to the Candidating Secretary, who will share with the Local Interview panel.

Local Interview on behalf of Synod (where held) – HELD NOT LESS THAN 13 WEEKS BEFORE THE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE AND NOT SOONER THAN ONE WEEK AFTER CHURCH MEETING IN ORDER FOR ALL PAPERWORK TO BE SENT TO INTERVIEWERS. Send report to the Synod next day or ASAP.

Synod interview – requires application form, references, note of decisions, assessed service and reflective accounts. ALLOW ONE WEEK TO DISTRIBUTE PAPERS AFTER RECEIVING REPORT FROM LOCAL INTERVIEW AND HOLD THE INTERVIEW NOT LATER THAN 12 WEEKS BEFORE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE.

Decision not to recommend. Candidate needs to be debriefed and helped to explore vocation in a different way. Ministries office informed that the candidature has come to an end.

Papers now include vocational report to Assessors following the Synod interview. Decision to recommend. Synod Candidating Secretary notifies Ministries office immediately so that candidates can be given at least **one month** notice of attendance at Assessment Conference with travel details etc. Candidate papers sent to Ministries office at least **10 weeks** before Conference.

Assessment Conference. After the conference, members of the Assessment Board will meet the candidate at the relevant synod office on a date previously agreed with Synod and Candidate, **within 8-14 days** after the Conference.

TAKES AT LEAST SIX MONTHS WITHOUT COMPLICATIONS

This is one in a series of booklets about the United Reformed Church's programme for Education for Ministry Phase 1 (EM1).

The booklets can be read and downloaded at: www.bit.ly/EM1-info

The United Reformed Church

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